

St. Augustine and Plotinus

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TEXTS AND STUDIES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE AND LANGUAGE

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St. Augustine and Plotinus

The Human Mind as Image of the Divine

By

Laela Zwollo



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Preface

As an historian of ancient Greek and Roman culture, I was originally not particularly interested in the period of early Christianity. I equated the entire two millennia of the Christian faith with the conservative and insular religion of my youth in my birthplace in the sixties. The Catholic schools which I and my brothers and sisters attended provided excellent education yet with a dose of 'inflexible indoctrination' (as I saw it). If Christianity from the recent past—namely the fifties and sixties—was not able to inspire me, think of how uncomely Christianity must have been in the first few centuries of its existence! Yet piecemeal discoveries slowly but surely unraveled these prejudices.

During my studies for the degree of Master in Ancient History at the VU University in Amsterdam, it was at my courses on Ancient Philosophy with Prof. A.P. (Bram) Bos where I heard for the first time about the Greek philosophical influence on Christian authors in late antiquity. Prof. Bos' enthusiasm for discovering parallels in Greek philosophical concepts in the Old and New Testament, Greek mythology and other ancient texts was contagious and eventually awakened in me a fascination for the roots of Christianity.

I learned of the debates in antiquity among prominent Christian intellectuals about matters which in my youth were taught as completely settled and absolute truth. I learned about the Greek philosophical concepts in the arguments of both Christian debaters, which in itself, on another level, were the butt of even more complex contemporary debates between patristic scholars, theologians and experts in ancient philosophy. I eagerly stepped in.

Enticed by the depth and complexity of Augustine's and the Neo-Platonist Plotinus' thought, it began to dawn on me that self-reflection and delving into the abysses of our minds could actually pertain to religious experience and with no exception, to being a Christian. In the ancient period, philosophizing and religious devotion went hand-in-hand.

The focus of these two thinkers on the highest region of the soul, the intellect, as exclusively having an intrinsically strong connection to the divine, is not something we would likely hear today in liturgy or sermons. This notion has been criticized for throwing the consideration for the human being as a whole out of proportion. Such a notion would be more at home, for example, in modern-day Western Buddhism, meditation, in the genre Esoterica or even nineteenth century Romantic philosophy. Following the example of other church fathers, Augustine integrated this element from Plotinus' Platonism into his conception of universal truth embodied in Christ's Incarnation. Yet his assimilation far surpassed that of his Christian predecessors.

Reading Augustine made me realize that our personal understanding of our individual existence derives from borrowing notions from almost everyone with whom we come into contact, including the thought provoking books we enjoyed reading but also from those persons and publications for which we acquired disdain; even if this assimilation mechanism is to some degree unconscious. Augustine did a great service to us by relaying his personal history of his intellectual maturation, of how he passed through various ideologies, such as Manichaeism, astrology, Skepticism and different brands of Platonism, all of which prepared him for embracing Christian faith. This phase of his life is something which, I believe, many people today searching for truth can identify with. All these ideologies left a mark in his thinking, just as Augustine has left a mark on mine and most of the Augustinian researchers I am acquainted with.

Plotinus' philosophy was not only an eye opener for Augustine, but also for me. This 'philosopher of transcendence' *par excellence* was devoted to scientific contemplation of matters which are normally beyond the grasp of the human mind. As Augustine mentioned, Platonist ideals were only a few steps away from the same faith which many Christians in Augustine's day professed. Would such a claim be feasible today?

My first engagement with Augustine involved an exploration of his Christology, his doctrine of the Word of God, *Verbum Dei*, based upon John 1:1–5, comparing it to the conception of the *Logos* of Plotinus—which became the topic of my Master's thesis. However its completion left me with a sense of incompleteness, realizing that I had only scratched the surface of both Augustine's and Plotinus' thinking.

A doctoral thesis was the next step, which afforded a welcome expansion of this terrain and an intensification of the original groundwork, with much more time to concentrate on challenging primary sources, such as Augustine's *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* and *The Trinity*, as well as less familiar treatises in Plotinus' *Enneads*. A dissertation allowed me to focus on an astonishing common element which demanded much space for substantiation: the notion of the human mind as an image of God or of the Godhead.

My dissertation, as well as this present monograph (which is based upon the latter), carries the mark of the instruction of Prof. Bos: the deep probing into ancient texts and questioning the meaning of difficult passages. It reflects as well the broad expertise on Augustine's theology of Prof. Paul van Geest, at the Tilburg University School of Catholic Theology, who communicated to no small degree his enthusiasm for Augustine, while encouraging me to develop my own standpoint. Prof. van Geest, as the director of The Netherlands' Centre of Patristic Research (CPO), also provided me as a doctoral student with ample opportunities for personal growth, such as speaking at academic confer-

ences in Utrecht, Oxford and those of the Patristische Arbeitsgemeinschaft, all of which greatly enriched my knowledge of Augustine. Many fellow researchers affiliated with the CPO and also De Landelijke Werkgroep voor de Gnostiek (Dutch Gnostic Studies), assisted me as well by discussing the material at different phases of my research. My thanks as well to Prof. Rudi te Velde at the Tilburg University School of Catholic Theology, who was willing to be my sparring partner on ensuing issues in ancient philosophy, as well as aiding me in furthering my knowledge of Plotinus and Augustine.

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the many memorable visits to the libraries of Augustinian institutes in Rome, Heverlee, Belgium and Eindhoven, in the Netherlands; the friendly assistance of the librarians, the generous hospitality of the Augustinian monastery in Heverlee; as well as the amicable encouragement of Prof. Anthony Dupont at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the Katholieke Universiteit in Leuven. Dr. Martijn Schrama OSA of the Augustinian Institute in Utrecht was particularly helpful by offering dialogue on Augustine's Christology and other themes, especially from this church father's sermons and letters. I am also especially grateful to Dr. Piet Hein Hupsch for checking the Greek texts and giving me advice.

In all phases of my research, the assistance of my husband Martin was indispensable. My gratitude is inexpressible for his resolving at record speed all kinds of computer fiascos, for his offering much sound advice on layout and design, and for generally applauding me for my creative endeavors.

Abbreviations

Works of Augustine

<i>Civ. Dei</i>	<i>De civitate dei contra paganos</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessionum libri XIII</i>
<i>Contra acad.</i>	<i>Contra academicos</i>
<i>Contra sec.</i>	<i>Contra Secundinum Manichaeum</i>
<i>Div. qu.</i>	<i>De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus</i>
<i>Doc. chr.</i>	<i>De doctrina christiana</i>
<i>En. Ps.</i>	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i>
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistula</i>
<i>Gen. litt. imperfect.</i>	<i>De genesi ad litteram liber unus imperfectus</i>
<i>Gen. adu. Man.</i>	<i>De genesi aduersus Manicheos</i> <i>or De genesi contra Manichaeos</i>
<i>Gen. litt.</i>	<i>De genesi ad litteram libri XII</i>
<i>Io. eu. tr.</i>	<i>In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXXIV</i>
<i>Trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i>
<i>Retract.</i>	<i>Retractationes</i>

Plotinus

Enn. *The Enneads*

Abbreviated Reference Works

<i>A&M Latin West</i>	<i>Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West: Proceedings of the Fribourg-Utrecht Symposium of the International Association of Manichaeic Studies</i> , eds.: J. van Oort, O. Wermelinger and G. Wurst (Leiden, 2001)
<i>AttA</i>	<i>Augustine through the Ages</i> , eds.: A.D. Fitzgerald, et al. (Cambridge, 1999)
<i>A-L</i>	<i>Augustinus-Lexikon</i> , eds.: C. Mayer, et al. (Basel, 1999–etc.)
<i>BA</i>	<i>Bibliothèque Augustinienne. Oeuvres de Saint Augustin</i>
<i>CCA</i>	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Augustine</i> , eds.: E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (Cambridge, 2001; second edition 2014)

<i>CCP</i>	<i>Cambridge Companion to Plotinus</i> , ed.: L.P. Gerson (Cambridge, 1999)
<i>LAHR</i>	<i>Late Antique History of Religion</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
LZ	Laela Zwollo (as author's note)

Augustine and Plotinus on Imaging the Divine

1 Introduction

What human circumstance is so great that a man will not think little of it who has climbed higher than all this and depends on nothing below? ... Why then should he think that falling from power and the ruin of his city are great matters? If he thought that they were great evils, or evils at all, he would deserve to be laughed at for his opinion; there would be no virtue left in him if he thought that wood and stones and (God help us!) the death of mortals, were important, this manought to think about death that it is better than life with the body!¹

Enneads 1.4.7-15-25

When Plotinus (204/5–290) wrote these passages, he surely had no inkling that these lines would become legendary more than a century and half later as a motto at the deathbed of one of his most famous readers, St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354–430). In the final days of Augustine's life, the Vandals were plundering and destroying his city. His friend and caretaker, bishop Possidius, wrote, 'In the midst of these evils, he was comforted by the saying of a certain wise man'. The saying was posted on the wall above his bed next to some quotes from the psalms. *Non erit magnus magnum putans quod cadunt ligna et lapides et moriuntur mortales*. He is no great man who thinks it is a great thing that sticks and stones should fall, and that men, who must die, should die.² Since the middle of the twentieth century, it has been recognized that these words were a liberal translation of the citation above from the *Enneads* and that this 'certain wise man' was none other than Plotinus. This story reveals something

1 *Plotinus with an English translation, The Enneads*, translation by A.H. Armstrong (London: 1967, 1989 revised) including the Greek text by Henry-Schwyzler.

2 *Sancti Augustini Vita* 28.11. Quoted in J.J. McEvoy, 'Neo-Platonism and Christianity: Influence, Syncretism or Discernment?', in: T. Finan, V. Twoney (eds.), *The Relationship between Neo-Platonism and Christianity* (Dublin 1992) 155–170, 155. The English translation is by M. Muller and R.J. Deferrari from: *Early Christian Biographies, The Fathers of the Church* (New York 1953) xv.; These verses were also integrated into the work of Augustine's North African contemporary, the poet Decimus Magnus Ausonius (310–395) (*Epitaph* 32, 9–10 ed. Peiper 1886, 84) 'miremur periisse homines? Monumenta fatiscunt mors etiam saxis nominibusque venit'.

special about the relationship the church father had with the philosophy of the great Neo-Platonist.³ The articulation of that relationship is the goal of this study.⁴

St. Augustine of Hippo was a lover of divine wisdom. He found wisdom in Christ, the bible and in the Catholic tradition which he regarded as universal truth. Evidently he was also deeply impressed by the truths found in Plotinus' interpretation of Plato, the great Greek philosopher of classical antiquity. The church father's familiarity with Plotinus' work *The Enneads* is well documented in Augustine's major exegetical works.⁵ His assimilation of Plotinian concepts are in particular best represented in his doctrine of the image of God.⁶ This doctrine is derived from Genesis 1:26–27, which states that man was created to God's image. According to the church father, God's image can be found in the highest and most immaterial part of the human soul, the intellect. This part of the soul seeks transcendent wisdom and to image God perfectly. A great many aspects in Augustine's doctrine correspond to Plotinus' philosophy of images and imaging, especially his depiction of the human intellect as image of the divine Intellect.

3 'Neo-Platonism' is a modern term generally applied to followers of Plato (ca. 428–348 BC) and specifically to philosophers who lived in late antiquity CE. This 'movement' is considered to have begun with Plotinus from the 3rd century and his disciple, Porphyry, lasting up until the closing of the Platonic Academy in Athens in 529. 'Middle-Platonism' is a collective term referring to independent interpreters of Plato who lived generally after the Sceptics (the Academics who dominated the Academy in the 3rd century B.C.E.) and before Plotinus. In this sense, the terms 'Platonism' and 'Platonist' employed in this study generally refer to Plato's interpreters; 'Platonic' directly to the thought or works of Plato himself. When Augustine himself uses the term *Platonici*, for example throughout *Conf.*, he gives the impression to generally mean all followers of Plato, undifferentiated. In *Civ. Dei*, he treats specific Platonists by name and refers to the 'new era' Platonists beginning with Plotinus (VIII.12).

4 This monograph is a re-working of: 'St. Augustine, the Human Mind as Image of the Divine' (Dissertation, University of Tilburg, School of Catholic Theology, 2016).

5 His major exegetical works, such as *Conf.*, *Civ. Dei*, *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.*, as well as the four treatises in his 'philosophical' period during his stay in Cassiciacum, are primarily geared to an intellectual readership. M. Wisse estimates the readership of *The Trinity* as likely being Platonists or 'borderline Christians' who were considering conversion: *Trinitarian Theology beyond Participation Augustine's De Trinitate and Contemporary Theology* (London, New York, 2011) 27. See also J. Cavadini, 'The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*', *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992) 103–123.

6 I.e., Isabelle Bochet, *Imago*, A-L, vol. 3, Fasc. 3/4, 509–520; J.E. Sullivan, *The Image of God, The Doctrine of St. Augustine and its Influence* (Dubuque, Iowa, 1963).

2 A New Study on Augustine and Plotinus?

Augustine's doctrine of the image of God provides justification for pinning the label 'Christian Platonist' onto him. This label also suggests that Augustine had a particular relationship with this particular pagan philosophy. Is it peculiar that a Christian philosopher would be so strongly influenced by a pagan thinker? In antiquity this was not uncommon, yet Augustine's Platonist affiliation seems to be stronger than most philosophically-oriented Christians of that time. From the point of view that Augustine, not only in his lifetime but also in the last millennium and a half after his death, has been an influential teacher of Church doctrine, it is justifiably questionable as to whether the Platonist Christian doctrine of Augustine can or should be useful for Christians today or whether the 'pagan elements' are even desirable in the first place. At least since the beginning of the twentieth century and up to the present, there has been much literature published on the 'philosopher Augustine' and his sources. This remains an intriguing subject which has elicited many debates and responses. In this regard, it is viable to ask—is a new study on Augustine's Platonism really called for? My answer is a full-fledged YES and for a myriad of reasons.

Throughout the broad range of Augustinian literature available, a love-hate relationship with Augustine persists. Our heart strings are strummed when we discover a passage which perfectly expresses one of our profoundest inner reflections: Augustine, the Christian mystical poet. Then there is the Augustine detested for his (alleged) disdain for the human body, sexuality and the world. He is also regarded as the culprit of the perpetuated misogyny, excessive Puritanism, and the helpless struggle with physical intimacy in Christian culture ... even up to today.⁷ To save Augustine's face—even if only intended for a limited extent—it is usually his Platonist affiliation which takes the blame for this.

These stereotypes surprisingly still show up in serious academic studies. In many cases, the author has reproduced another researcher's conclusions without having delved into Augustine's work or the breadth of his oeuvre.⁸ Or

7 E.g., Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent; Sex, Politics in Early Christianity* (New York: 1989) lays the blame for Christian sexual repression and misogyny directly on Augustine. For Pagels, it is not what Augustine really intended which counts, but what he left as legacy. From Ann Matter, 'Women', *Atta*, 887–892, 891.

8 The highly relevant comment of Michel René Barnes cannot be passed over here: 'Strangely it is not just possible but quite common to have a reading of Augustine without ever having read Augustine.' ['Reading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity', in: Stephan Davis, i.a., (eds.) *The Trinity* (Oxford, 1999) 145–176, 145.] (Apparently this well formulated remark has been recycled often: quoted from Gerard Bonner on the first page of John Rist's *Augustine*, Cambridge,

passages are extracted from an obscure work of Augustine's, disregarding the nature of the work, its motives and context and used as proof of an attitude which is today considered incorrect and objectionable. It appears that much of this kind of criticism of Augustine is based upon the premise that pulling an influential church authority down from his pedestal provides a beneficial catharsis—not only for the author but for the gullible readers as well. It seems there are also persons who believe that the world would be better off when the phenomenon Augustine is buried for good with the past.

Admittedly, delving into Augustine's work or the breadth of his oeuvre is not an easy pursuit. Not only because Augustine's entire massive oeuvre is preserved, but also because Augustine's major works are not readily accessible to the general public without solid preparation. The same applies to a great deal of the treatises in Plotinus' *Enneads*.

More fuel for the distaste for Augustine is the image of him as the vehement Heretic Hunter, obsessively condemning those of another opinion to the eternal fires of damnation. The latter image of Augustine is particularly relevant as to why new studies on Augustine, the Christian Platonist, should be welcomed. Augustine saw not only Gnostics, his fellow Christians but all philosophers as well as his sparring partners. He regarded several Platonists, such as Porphyry or other unnamed Neo-Platonists of his day, as opponents to whom he inexhaustibly delivered an avid rebuttal. His treatment of these philosophers was essentially not much different than those of his fellow Christians with a diverging disposition: first praise, followed by a sharp confrontation.

In all of his major works, severe criticism of certain Platonists can be found. In this light, pinning the tag of Christian Platonist onto Augustine entails certain risks, hence demanding a high degree of precision. Where does the border lie between his Christianity and his Platonism? Or are they both tangled up together?

In spite of the fact that these still existing stereotypes and misunderstandings in Augustinian literature provoke countless discussions, this study will not attempt to directly deconstruct them. In fact, it will attempt to detour most of them and steer towards discovering the philosopher Augustine in his own historical context, juxtaposing his ideas (scriptural exegesis) against those of his favorite Platonist and determining where the convergences and divergences lie between them. It is not of interest to this study to come to a judgment of the consequences of Augustine's thinking on Christianity, having been so deeply

1999). Yet ironically, Barnes is referring to readings of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity here, as being 'dominated' by Neo-Platonist influence, which Barnes rejects.

influenced by Plotinus' philosophy.⁹ Nor is the main interest here to evaluate Augustine's exegetical method, his Trinitarian doctrine, or to what extent it contributes to contemporary Christian teaching.¹⁰ It will not discern Augustine's capacities as a philosopher or the credibility of his reasoning.¹¹

On the other hand, constructive criticism of this church father's thinking based upon good study and argumentation is altogether different; it is appropriate and new publications on Augustine of this caliber should be welcome. Both lovers and despisers of Augustine should respect this church father as an historical icon, a phenomenal thinker of his own time who leaves us at times with the baffling impression of having composed timeless doctrines.

3 Key Aspects of This Study

This study will explore to what extent Augustine utilized Plotinus' philosophy for his anthropology and psychology in his doctrine of the *imago Dei*. It will delve into Augustine's exegesis of Genesis and particularly into his doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It is in this work, *De Trinitate*, where Augustine fully developed

9 An example of recent critique of Augustine's Platonist orientation is P. Cary's *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford, 2000). Cary sees a 'fundamental incompatibility between the ancient contemplative ideal of Platonism and the biblical gospel' (182, note 36) and encourages his readers 'to resist the religious attractiveness of Platonism' (ix–x)—especially its call to turn away from all that is outside the self and focus inward on the soul. Furthermore, Augustine's 'Neoplatonist understanding undermines the ultimate meaning of Christian faith.' (41). His Platonist commitments prevent him from affirming that word or sacrament can 'be an efficacious means of grace.' (143). Cary evaluates Augustine's project of the inward turn as being so vitiated by Platonism that these aspects (grace, the hearing of Scripture, preaching and church sacraments) are brushed to the margin.; R. Crouze provides an overview of the scholarly assessment of Augustine's Platonism '*Paucis Mutatis Verbis*', in: R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (eds.) *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honor of Gerald Bonner* (London, 2000) 37–50.

10 There are already excellent recent studies on this: e.g., M.R. Barnes, 'Rereading Augustine'; and articles by Lewis Ayres, John Behr, Khaled Anatolios, etc. in: Sarah Coakley (ed.), *The God of Nicaea: Disputed Questions in Patristic Trinitarianism*, *Harvard Theological Review*, 100: 2, April 2007.

11 See John Rist on the background and history of many misconceptions regarding Augustine especially in the last century: 'De spiritualiteit van Augustinus in het begin van de 21ste eeuw', in: T.J. van Bavel, B. Bruning (eds.) *Sint Augustinus* (Heverlee-Leuven: 2007) 287–299. [English version: T.J. van Bavel (ed.) '*Augustine's Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*' (Brussels: 2007)]; See also: T.J. van Bavel, *Over Augustinus: liefde en vriendschap* (Kampen, 1989) 49–66 [English edition: *Christians in the World: Introduction to the Spirituality of St. Augustine* (New York: 1980)]; Ann Matter, 'Women', 887–892.

his teaching of the image of God. Accordingly, this study will focus on Augustine's mystagogy, how he depicted the image's ascent to God especially through two major elements in his doctrine, knowledge and love.

The intention here is to identify which Plotinian concepts Augustine utilized in order to reinforce his doctrine of the image of God. To do this, much space is utilized comparing the most salient conceptions in Augustine's doctrine with similar ones in the *Enneads*. This task invariably results in an ocean of similarities; the challenge here is discerning the most significant differences between the two thinkers and evaluating the numerous correspondences in their doctrines. The enormous breadth of the results from this inquiry will automatically demand a response to the question: how can we characterize Augustine as a 'Christian Platonist'? This second major inquiry will be pursued by concentrating mostly on Augustine's conception of knowledge and love from his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*,¹² analyzed in light of Plotinus' epistemology and notion of *Eros* (Ἔρως) in the framework of the human intellect's imaging of the divine.

3.1 Chapter Overview

The best way to pursue the goals above is to begin with a general survey of Augustine's commentary of Platonism (in Chapter 2) from his works *Confessions* (*Conf.*), *The City of God* (*Civ. Dei*) and *The Trinity* (*Trin.*). His appraisal of Platonists provides a useful background and reference for pursuing the inquiries and sub-inquiries of this study. His intellectual development in his younger years, as relayed in his autobiography in *Conf.*, is reviewed in order to show, among other things, the transition between his Manichaean and Platonist affiliation. The attention given to Manichaeism is helpful as it tells us in the end much about Augustine's relationship to Plotinus philosophy. Augustine's unilateral negative attitude towards Manichaeism is especially significant here in contrast to his relatively friendly critique of some Platonists. His critique of Manichaeism includes their contention of the consubstantiality of the soul and God. In light of Augustine's extensive commentary on Platonism in *Civ. Dei*, we must ask why he refrained to address the same critique to the Neo-

12 The term *imago Dei* is used in both *Gen. litt.* and *Trin* and refers to the human intellect. However, in order to differentiate Augustine's treatment of Gen. 1:26–27 in these works, I often use *imago Dei* to designate his doctrine in *Gen. litt* and then *imago Trinitatis* for his doctrine in *Trin*. Augustine seems to use the term *imago Dei* just as often as *imago Trinitatis* in *Trin.*, although his aim in the latter is to explore how the intellect is triune and how it can reflect the triune Godhead. Thus *imago Dei* can serve as a synonym for *imago Trinitatis*, yet this is not necessarily the case the other way around.

Platonists (Plotinus and Porphyry) who likewise embraced the notion of the divine human soul? As such, a new issue is unearthed, which is virtually non-existent in scholarly literature, which becomes an important underlying theme throughout the entire study.

Most authors dealing with Augustine's criticism of Platonism stop at *Conf.*, which does not do this topic justice, because his most complete discussion of Platonism is actually integrated into his vision of the city of God in *Civ. Dei*. Examining his appraisal in this work is especially advantageous, as it brings forth many new insights: regarding, for example, the extent of Augustine's knowledge of Platonism and his own engagement with Plotinian philosophy. These topics will draw our attention again in upcoming chapters, especially Chapter 11 on Augustine's Christian Platonism.

In order to understand Augustine, we should be able to fully grasp the beauty and attraction in Plotinus' philosophy which is highly complex and rich in nuances. The treatment on Plotinus in Chapter 3 is generally focused on four areas: his conception of the Godhead (The One, Intellect, Soul and Λόγος); his system of imaging; his depiction of the creation of the human being, especially the intellect (as image of the divine Intellect); and Plotinus' theory of Ideas. The divine Ideas—as Form-archetypes for things in the visual world—play an important role in Plotinus' philosophy in various ways: such as in his depiction of the coming of existence of the world, as well as in his epistemology (as in the human image-intellect's understanding of 'material images'). Plotinus' theory of Ideas also involves his account of the development of the rational soul or intellect imitating and resembling the Godhead. His conception of the intelligible world of Ideas and their subsequent contemplation by the human intellect as image of God is also vital to Plotinus' descriptions of the ascent of the soul to its ultimate origin, treated in the final section in Chapter 3. In the context of the ascent, contemplation of the Ideas generally encompasses two 'routes': acquiring divine knowledge and experiencing divine love and beauty. The topics discussed here are of particular importance because it is precisely these topics which occur in Augustine's doctrine of the image of God, albeit in a different formulation.

The question brought out in Chapter 2 described above, concerning Plotinus' deeming the soul or intellect as divine, has a decisive influence on this chapter, as it demands plunging deeply into Plotinus' thinking. This analysis results in bringing to light inconsistencies in Plotinus' doctrine of the soul. These inconsistencies and their interpretation are well known questions of debate in Plotinian scholarship. Yet these questions on the divine intellect, as well as the problems in Plotinus' doctrine of the soul, are never discussed in Augustinian-Platonist scholarship.

Assuming the church father had read several or even many treatises from the *Enneads*, I duly ask whether Augustine had been familiar with these inconsistencies in Plotinus' thought, and what could have been the motivation for his omission of critique of the divinity of the human soul in his extensive appraisal of Platonism. This question does not get resolved in this chapter, it does return elsewhere and often, in particular in the comparisons between the two thinkers' conceptions of imaging in the intellect as related to the ascent.

It is perhaps needless to say that this monograph strives to make the doctrines of Plotinus and Augustine more accessible, by providing ample explanations as well as by situating them in their appropriate contexts. This justifies the lengthy expositions in Chapters 3–5, for example in Chapter 3 on Plotinus' doctrine of the Λόγος. This particular notion is intricately bound to Plotinus' conceptions of imaging, the Ideas, and acquiring knowledge. The lengthy expositions are instructive because they appear in Augustine's thought on the Godhead and the image of God. To my knowledge there is no other recent scholarly publication on Augustine which delves as deeply into Plotinus' thinking on images, imaging and the image of God as this monograph here.¹³

The subsequent chapters are devoted to Augustine's doctrine of the image of God. First, it is treated in the context of his commentaries on Genesis (Chapter 4) particularly in *Gen. litt.* and then in his work *Trin.* (Chapter 5). The division of the material in these chapters as such is based upon chronological considerations. *Gen. litt.* was published earlier than *Trin.*, however the completion of the final books of *Gen. litt.* (especially book XII) overlaps the composition of some of the first books of *Trin.*¹⁴

Chapter 4 begins with a general exposition on his exegesis of the creation story in *Gen. litt.* and continues by focusing on his interpretation of Genesis 1:26–27 ('Let us create man to the image of God'). In his view, this bible verse indicates the creation of the human soul. Augustine's doctrine of creation is of

13 However, Gerard Boersma's study comes close: *Augustine's Early Theology of Image, A Study in the Development of Pro-Nicene Theology* (Oxford, 2016).

14 P.-M. Hombert's dating of *Gen. litt.*: books I–IIIb: 404–405; IIIb–XII: 412–414 [*Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne* (Paris, 2000) 45–80]. This differs from Edmund Hill's: Augustine's commencement of writing was in 399–401 or even 404; the work was published in 416. [*On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Introductions by M. Fiedrowicz; translation and notes by E. Hill, (New York, 2000) 164.]

Hombert's dating of *Trin.*: Book I: 400–403, (evidently thereafter a pause); Books II–III: 411/412–413; Book IV: 414–415; Books V–VII were written from 416 onward. Book VIII was finished between 416–418. Books XIIb (chapters 14 and 15) to book XV: after 420 but before 426–427.

relevance to this study for several reasons, mainly because he establishes certain distinctions there which remain of importance to his overall doctrine of the image of God. A few examples are: the differentiation between the physical body and the soul, between the physical sense world and the divine realm, and between creatures and the Creator. These differentiations are likewise matters of importance in the later comparisons with Plotinus. We see in his doctrine of creation a direct indebtedness to many aspects of Plotinian cosmology, for instance: the theory of the causal Ideas, of their subsequent images as well as their λόγοι, traceable in Augustine's terms, the *rationes*. Moreover, it is the process of imaging in Plotinus' philosophy, as the foundation of Plotinus' notion of the intellect as image of God (the divine Intellect), which is echoed in Augustine's doctrines of creation, the image of God and the image of the Trinity.

Noteworthy in my treatment of *Gen. litt.* is the relevance of Augustine's conception of the origin of the human soul in the *caelum caeli*—the region of the angels of pure intellect—which is seldom discussed in scholarly literature in relation to Augustine's depiction of the image of God.

Of further importance to underscore here is Augustine's strong association of the *imago Dei* with the term *intellectus* in *Gen. litt.* This term is defined in his theory of three visions—especially intellectual vision—in book XII. Most researchers dealing with this work or with the *imago Dei* overlook this extremely relevant correlation. These connections (between the *imago Dei*, *caelum caeli* and intellectual vision) likewise form the foundation of Augustine's treatment of the *imago Trinitatis* in *Trin.*—an additional important aspect which is often missed in key scholarly studies on *Trin.*¹⁵ In the latter work, 'intellect' is mentioned less often, assumed by the author to be already understood by his readers.

Chapter 5 is devoted exclusively to Augustine's elaboration of the *imago Dei*, as he evolved it to its signification of *imago Trinitatis*. Because this work contains his most extensive and profound reflections on the image of God and the human mind, it occupies the most space in this monograph.

Foremost in this chapter is the embedding of Augustine's doctrine in its literary context, which is often omitted in other studies.¹⁶ A due explanation is given of how Augustine explores his subject, by indicating his underlying motivations and inquiries. These summaries will greatly contribute to making more sense of

15 E.g., in Luigi Gioia's treatment of the image in *Gen. litt.*, and consequently in his treatment of *Trin.* ['Theological Epistemology of Augustine's *De Trinitate*' (Dissertation, Oxford University, 2008) 249–259, 275–297].

16 As mentioned above in Barnes: 'Re-reading Augustine's Theology'.

Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* and his epistemology. Yet the greatest benefit is that they enable us to fully speculate in the end about Augustine's readings of Plotinus' doctrine of the soul and how he likely reflected on Plotinus' elaborate system on imaging in order to underpin his own thoughts.

The aspects of knowledge and love in Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, as key objects of this study, merit extensive delineation and are likewise the most relevant for studying the Plotinian influence. Throughout *Gen. litt.* and especially in the context of the exegesis of Gen. 1: 26–27, Augustine emphasizes the necessity of obtaining knowledge and predominantly divine knowledge in order for the image-intellect to obtain a progressive resemblance of God. However, in *Trin.*, he evolves the element of knowledge in books VII–XV much further, not only in building up a consistent epistemology, but also in fusing knowledge with the element love. As such, a complete picture of Augustine's epistemology is constructed here—it includes all elements mentioned in *Trin.* which lead to divine knowledge, including faith and the practice of prayer, all of which are usually overlooked in Augustinian-Plotinian scholarship.

Augustine's combination of the element knowledge with the element love in his exploration of the human mind in *Trin.* VIII–X signifies a remarkable doctrinal development. In these books, he underscores the notion that all knowledge and truth is impossible without some form of love: self-knowledge is impossible without self-love and vice versa. He sees the elements of one's mind, knowledge and love as fused into a unified, inseparable human trinity. His point here is essentially that acquiring knowledge of God and assimilating God's love (loving God and fellow humans) are two ways to become a better image of the Trinity or godlike.

In *Gen. litt.*, Augustine demonstrates that the intellect images the Creator, the Word of God or Christ, who possesses the eternal Ideas. Yet in *Trin.*, he explores how the intellect images the entire Holy Trinity, which necessarily includes God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit, the latter of which he designated as divine Love and Will.

A note on the organization of material: Chapters 3–5 are divided roughly into four sections beginning with the Godhead, followed by the general context in which imaging in both thinkers is embedded, then specifically the image of God as intellect, topped off with a section on the soul's ascent back to God. This division may appear forced or scholastic, yet the organization of the material as such accommodates the large amount of material in consideration in the best way possible. It will not only afford insights as to the development of Augustine's doctrine of the image of God in the later years of his life, but will also greatly facilitate the comparisons of the two thinkers in Chapters 6–9.

The reader will notice that the material treated in Chapters 2–5 is intended as the groundwork for the analyses in Chapters 6–9. The content of the former chapters is predominantly descriptive; derived from the primary sources, yet explicative, tackling many interpretation problems as well as questioning the interpretations of other researchers. Here the enormous complexity of both Augustine's and Plotinus' thinking is striking; both tend to find much satisfaction in attempting to explain the unexplainable (such as transcendence and immateriality), which often include lengthy ruminations, aporetic or paradoxical results. These paradoxes, such as on matter, the human body and the world, require proper delineation, as they are the hallmarks of many of their teachings.

Chapters 6–9 pursue comparisons between Augustine and Plotinus concentrating on the most central features of the material studied: on the Godhead (6), the image-intellect and epistemology (7), on love (8) and on the ascent (9). Chapters 10–12 address the main inquiries, providing syntheses of the analyses which are conclusive in character. Chapter 10, entitled 'Plotinus in Augustine's Doctrine of the Image of God', delivers a response to the first inquiry of this study. As such, it serves as a watershed for all the major similarities and differences from the comparisons in Chapters 6–9. The task here is to pinpoint and articulate precisely the major differences. In the final section of this chapter, the results of all the comparisons in Chapters 6–9 are put into perspective of Augustine's appraisal of Platonism in Chapter 2. This entails an evaluation of Augustine's explicit points of critique. We also return here to the subject of the divinity of the soul which Augustine omitted in his explicit appraisal which, as will be evident, is nonetheless present implicitly—in Augustine's corrections of aspects in the *Enneads* which were inconsistent or unclear.

Chapter 11 elaborates and reflects on the results of the analyses from Chapter 10, carried out through a new departure point—attempting to construct a clear picture of how Augustine should be characterized as 'Christian Platonist'. There are a number of ways to approach this question. First we must come to some kind of definition of the term 'Christian Platonism'. Although there is no shortage of this literature on this subject, this will be pursued utilizing the material treated in this study. The ambition here is to arrive at a fresh and more appropriate viewpoint concerning Augustine's relationship to Plotinus' philosophy.

This monograph will draw to a close with a short Epilogue (Chapter 12), in which I reflect on what this study can further reveal to us about the bishop of Hippo. The epilogue elaborates on the results of Chapters 10–11, by focusing on other common elements in Augustine and Plotinus, as seen through Augustine's attitude towards biblical exegesis.

4 The Multiple Accounts of a *Status Quaestionis* in an Interdisciplinary Research

As one would expect in a broad, interdisciplinary study, many of the main themes are intermeshed. In the case of this study, there are: Augustine's theology, Augustine's philosophy, the doctrine of the image of God, the works of Augustine's utilized: *Civ. Dei*, *Gen. litt.*, *De Ideis*, *Trin.*; the *Enneads*, Plotinus' theology, the doctrine of imaging, intellect, and so on. Some, but not all of these themes, demand a *status quaestionis*. Because of the enormous literature available on Augustine, it will be helpful to first divide the most relevant questions on the state of research into two sections: Augustine's doctrine of the image of God and the Plotinian influence in Augustine's doctrine. Both of these topics branch out in several directions with a considerable number of subtopics. Thus both demand an extensive introduction of the theme itself.

4.1 *Augustine's Doctrine of the Image of God: Generally and Specifically*

Where do we begin? We could deal with this doctrine in his whole oeuvre, which would include an analysis of the changes or developments which occurred over the course of his career. Or we could tackle this task in another way, the younger Augustine vs. the older Augustine. Because the focus in this monograph is the church father's doctrine in his later major works, it obviously makes more sense to focus on the latter. Yet here we confront a lacuna—precisely what this study aims to fill. Hence, let us approach the former aspect in a general manner and move towards the latter, confronting a number of other specific themes along the way.

The human soul as having been created as image of God is mentioned throughout Augustine's entire oeuvre in at least 150 texts between the years 388–427 in various contexts.¹⁷ There are certainly differences which can be found in his articulation or his perspective. However the main lines of his doctrine remain remarkably consistent. As an example: the most significant change he made concerned the fall of Adam. It seems that in his early and middle phases of his life (up until the writing of *Gen. litt.*), he asserted that Adam's

17 The following is a list of primary sources in which Augustine treats the *imago Dei* in a significant way, i.e., in more than just a few lines. *De beata vita* (written in 386); *Soliloquiorum* 1.1.4 (written in 387); *De vera religione* 43.81, 26.49 (written in 389); *Gen. litt. imperfect.* 16.55–60 (written in 393–394) and 16.61–62 (added in 426–427); *Div. qu.* 1, 51 and 74 (the entire *Div. qu.* was likely written between 394–395); *Conf.* XIII.12.32 (and XIII.2.3–11, 12–13) (likely written between 397–401); *Civ. Dei*: XIII.11–12, XI.2–3, 26–28 (approx. 418–419); *Gen. litt.* III.19.29–32, VI.19.30 to the end of the book (written before 410), VII.22.32–33, 24.35, XII.31.59 (before 416); *Trin.* VII–XV (ca. 400–422).

sin had caused the *imago Dei* to be lost. He later corrected himself in *Retract.* and *Trin.* by emphasizing that the image of God cannot theoretically be lost, only damaged or deformed.¹⁸ I see this a relatively insignificant detail considering Augustine apparently never pursued what kind of consequences the loss of the image in humans would have for his other doctrines (such as predestination).

Augustine's interest in an interpretation of Gen. 1.26–27 grew with the years, as we see clearly in the increasing length of his treatments, first in *Gen. litt* and then especially *Trin.*, the most extensive, which represents the culmination of his doctrine. The entire development of Augustine's doctrine of the image of God has been tackled already by many excellent researchers. However, their focus tends to be on the doctrine of Augustine's early years. Some recent examples of this are Gerard Boersma (2016), J. Torchia (2013) and Jérôme Lagouanère (2012).¹⁹ These studies rest upon the groundbreaking work done by for example John Sullivan (1963) and A.G. Hamman (1987), and others, such as J. Heike (1960).²⁰ It should be evident that these accounts of *status quaestionis* have as their primary focus the particular themes of the studies being pursued, which means that the accent can vary considerably.

With a few exceptions (for example, Sullivan, Lagouanère), many studies on the development of Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* tend to skip over

18 Augustine assertion that Adam's sin had caused the *imago Dei* to be lost: e.g., *Gen. litt.* VI.27.38. His self-correction in *Retractiones* and *Trin.*—that the image of God can never be lost—took place around 412 according to Sullivan (*Image God*, 43). Another minor example: in *Gen. litt.* Augustine wrote that after the resurrection in the afterlife, humans will become equal to the angels in that they will acquire the perfect knowledge which the angels already possess (IV.23.40, 24.41; VII.21.30). In *Trin.*, Augustine specified that the perfected images will be equal to the angels and also to Christ, although not divine (XIV.18.24).

19 Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology*; J. Torchia, *Restless Mind, Curiositas & the Scope of Inquiry in St. Augustine's Psychology* (Milwaukee, 2013) Chapter 7; Jérôme Lagouanère, *Intériorité et réflexivité dans la pensée de saint Augustin. Formes et genèse d'une conceptualisation* (Paris, 2012) 438–447.

20 Sullivan, *Image of God*; A.G. Hamman, *L'homme image de Dieu, Essai d'une anthropologie chrétienne dans l'Église des cinq premiers siècles* (Paris, 1987) 238–277; J. Heike, *St. Augustine's Comments on "Imago Dei"* (An anthology of all his works exclusive of *De Trinitate*) collected, edited with critical notes and analytically presented by Rev. J. Heike, in *Classical Folia Supplement 111 (Augustinian Ideas that have Dominated the West)*, April 1960.

Other authors on Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei*: P. Agaësse and A. Solignac, *BA* 48 (1) and 49 (11), 'L'âme l'image de Dieu' (1.629–633), *ibidem*, 'Les problèmes de l'âme dans le *De genesi ad litteram*' (1.695–697); Bochet, 'Imago'; M.T. Clark, 'Image Doctrine', *Atta*, 440–442; T.A. Fay, 'Imago Dei Augustine's Metaphysics of Man', in: *Antonianum* (49) (1974), 173–197; R. Markus, 'Imago and Similitudo in Augustine', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 10, 1964, 125–143; G.A. McCool, 'The Ambrosian Origin of St. Augustine's Theology of the Image of God in Man', *Theological Studies*, vol. 20 (1959) 62–81; J.J. O'Meara, *The Creation of Man in St. Augustine's De genesi ad litteram* (Villanova, 1980).

Augustine's later rendition of the *imago Trinitatis*. The reason is simple and practical: both *Gen. litt.* and *Trin* are corpulent works which require much preliminary study before being able to delve into them.²¹ As such, I regard my extensive descriptive and explanatory chapter on Augustine's doctrine of the image of God as *Trinitatis* in particular as complementary or supplementary to the studies of Sullivan and Lagouanère. Concurrently, my study will provide a picture of Augustine's knowledge of Platonism in his later years. A separate overview of the state of research for his doctrine in *Trin.* is required and given below.

4.2 Augustine's Doctrine of the Image of the Trinity

Many recent researchers have done groundbreaking work on Augustine's doctrine of the image of God specifically geared to *Trin.*, such as Rowan Williams,²² Lewis Ayres,²³ Johannes Brachtendorf,²⁴ Luigi Gioia,²⁵ Michel Barnes²⁶ and Khaled Anatolios.²⁷

- 21 For example, R. Markus' widely consulted article ('*Imago Similitudo*') from 1964 on the development of Augustine's notion of image stops before *Trin.* and is therefore incomplete. Even O du Roy's seminal study on Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine does not go as far as *Trin.* [*Intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon Saint Augustine, Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris, 1966)]. The same applies to Heike's inventory (*St. Augustine's Comments on "Imago Dei"*).
- 22 'Sapientia and The Trinity, Reflections on the *De Trinitate*', in: B. Bruning, M. Lamberigts, J. van Houtem (eds.) *Collectanea Augustiniana, Melanges T.J. van Bavel*, vol. 1 (Leuven, 1990) 317–332; '*De Trinitate*', *AttA*, 845–851; 'The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in *De Trinitate*', in: J.T. Lienhard et al. (eds.) *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine Presbyter Factus Sum*, vol. 2 (New York, 1993) 121–134.
- 23 'The Discipline of Self-Knowledge in Augustine's Book x-*De Trinitate*', in: L. Ayres (ed.) *The Passionate Intellect, Essays on the Transformation of Classical Traditions* (London, 1995) 261–296; 'The Christological Context of Augustine's *De Trinitate* XIII: Toward Relocating Books VIII–XV', in: T. Finan, V. Twomey (eds.) *Studies in Patristic Theology* (Dublin, 1998) 95–121; *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge, 2010); 'Augustine on the triune life of God', *CCA* (2014) 60–80.
- 24 *Die Struktur des menschlichen Geistes nach Augustinus, Selbstreflexion und Erkenntnis Gottes in De Trinitate* (Hamburg, 2000); 'Der menschlichen Geist als Bild des trinitarischen Gottes-Ähnlichkeiten und Unähnlichkeiten', in: J. Brachtendorf (ed.) *Gott und Sein Bild-Augustins De Trinitate im Spiegel gegenwärtiger Forschung* (Munich, 2000) 155–172; 'Time, Memory and Selfhood in *De Trinitate*', in: E. Berman et G. O'Daly (eds.) *Le De Trinitate de saint Augustin: exégèse, logique et noétique: actes du colloque international de Bordeaux*, 16–19 juin 2010 (Paris, 2012) 221–233.
- 25 *Epistemology*, e.g., 232–269.
- 26 E.g., 'Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology', *Theological Studies* 56 (1995) 237–251.
- 27 'Oppositional Pairs and Christological Synthesis: Rereading Augustine's *De Trinitate*', *Theological Studies* 68 (2007) 231–253.

It is my observation that regarding *Trin.*, there seems to be two distinct camps of researchers. The first consists of theologians who are not interested in Augustine's philosophical sources and believe that his exegeses are purely what he intended—theological interpretations of the bible and nothing more. In other words, many imply that excavating the philosophical sources contributes little to our understanding of his doctrines.²⁸ The second group of researchers are those who focus on Augustine's use of Greek philosophical principles, who, to the dismay of the first group, often neglect the theological and inherently Christian nature of his works. Johannes Brachtendorf, whose work is an indispensable source for this study, is often at the receiving end of this critique.²⁹ Belonging to the second group, I, as others researchers, strive to give the 'purely theological' or scriptural themes their due consideration, yet my own focus on the Plotinian themes, especially in *Trin.*, may also in the eyes of some bear the same fault. Both camps are useful for this study. The theological experts mentioned above on Augustine's doctrine of the image of God in *Trin.* have been most helpful in presenting Augustine's doctrine in its broader context. However, for studying the Plotinian influence in the doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, from the authors mentioned above, only the comprehensive studies of Ayres, Brachtendorf and Rist can assist us.³⁰

A major point of critique directed to the second camp (especially coming from M.R. Barnes), is that *Trin.* studied exclusively through the lenses of Augustine as antique philosopher often suffers from decontextualization, by ignoring the original theological thesis which Augustine was treating.³¹ Although Barnes may not appreciate my Neo-Platonistic approach to Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity, I agree wholeheartedly with his reproach. For this reason, there is much attention to the context in which Augustine unfolds his doctrine of the image of God in *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.* in Chapters 4 and 5.

Williams remarks on the scholarship of *Trin.*: 'Over the last two decades, there has been a quiet revolution in Augustinian studies, especially in the study of what most would agree is Augustine's theological masterwork, *De Trinitate*'.

28 Barnes believes readings of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity which are dominated by the Neo-Platonist influence to be 'dead wrong': 'Reading Augustine's Theology', 145; *ibidem*, 'Trinitarian Theology'; Likewise: Matthew Drever, 'The Self before God? Rethinking Augustine's Trinitarian Thought', *Harvard Theological Review*, 100: 2 (2007) 233–242.

29 See E. Morgan, *The Incarnation of the Word, The Theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo* (London, 2010) 28-note 11.

30 Gioia's treatment of Augustine's philosophical sources in *Trin.* (58–67) as well as what Augustine means by 'Platonic' (269–275) is too general to enrich our understanding of Augustine's relationship with Plotinus.

31 Barnes, 'Re-reading Augustine's Theology'.

Williams discloses that older studies of *Trin.* contain many stereotypes which have slowly been replaced in the last years by more recent research.³² Although Williams may be referring to certain misconceptions which do not directly affect my study, it is of interest to point out that this monograph nonetheless makes many corrections in contemporary scholarship on Augustine's *imago Trinitatis*. First of all, because of the complexity and length of this work, it is not unusual to come across superficial oversights in the citations of Augustine's assertions.³³ Yet my study contributes to the scholarship of Augustine's doctrine of the *imago trinitatis* in *Trin.* in a number of other ways. The most representative examples are:

1. The established connections mentioned above in *Gen. litt.* between the *imago Dei*, the *caelum caeli* and intellectual vision, which are often absent in the literature on Augustine's image of God, are likewise often missing in scholarly studies on *Trin.*, in spite of the fact that they are of utmost importance in Augustine's treatment of the *imago Trinitatis*.³⁴ Among the recent scholarly publications on Augustine's self-knowledge in *Trin.*, Lewis Ayres and Lydia Schumacher are the only authors I have been able to locate who have recognized the connection between Augustine's third vision from *Gen. litt.* and his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*.³⁵
2. My study binds different elements in Augustine's epistemology in *Trin.* together, which in most studies are usually treated separately. In conjunction with the close association of these epistemological elements with

32 From the introduction in: E. Bermon and G. O'Daly (eds.) *Le De Trinitate de saint Augustin: exégèse, logique et noétique* (Paris, 2012) vii–viii. The new perspectives include those studies of i.e.: Ayres, Barnes, Anatolios, Gioia and himself. Examples of these new perspectives: on the literary unity of *Trin.* (Augustine's treatments of the Trinity and the image of the trinity are sometimes considered as separate parts of one book); Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine in contrast to the Trinitarian doctrine in the Eastern Roman Empire, etc.

33 To mention only a few: see Sullivan's seminal study on the *Image of God*, p. 146, where he deals with Augustine's depiction of the Holy Trinity as divine *Memoria*, *Intellegentia* and *Amor* (*Trin.* xv.23.43). Sullivan fails to point out Augustine's crucial remarks following this chapter, that these characteristics are merely comparisons (= analogies) for the sake of understanding how the image mirrors the divine (*Trin.* xv.25.45). M. Clark, in her commendable summary in 'De Trinitate' (CCA 2001, 91–102) writes on pp. 91 and 98 that Augustine speaks of 'uniting with God'. Yet Augustine only mentions in one place in *Trin.* that humans can unite with God (*Trin.* xiv.14.20) and that was in the afterlife. He never claims a total unification with the Holy Trinity (*Trin.* xiv.14.18).

34 E.g., in Gioia's treatment of the image in *Gen. litt.* and consequently his treatment of *Trin.*, these factors are neglected as well (*Epistemology*, 249–259, 275–297).

35 Ayres, *Trinity*, 150–152; and L. Schumacher, 'The Theo-logic of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge by Divine Illumination', *Augustinian Studies*, 41:2 (2010) 375–399.

spiritual and intellectual vision in *Gen. litt.* (as mentioned above), my analyses correct a number of misinterpretations of Augustine's views, in particular those dealing with self-knowledge (*se cogitare and se nosse*). Misinterpretations arise here due to the seldom recognized fact that Augustine's ambition in *Trin.* is to more accurately define the image of God in the rational soul, which is why he differentiates its lower and higher regions (*ratio inferior and superior*). The two types of knowledge: *scientia* and *sapientia*, as well as the two kinds of self-knowledge, are differentiated along the same general conceptual lines. As I show in Chapter 7.2, the experts on Augustine's epistemology, Brachtendorf and Pépin, fail to make these connections as well.³⁶ The advantage of a more accurate interpretation of Augustine's definition of the two kinds of self-knowledge is that it further sheds light on Augustine's varied conception of *verbum* ('inner truth' from *Trin.* VIII and XV), which is also conceptually defined in the same manner. This insight has also been overlooked by many.

The innovations listed above are without a doubt a result of the benefit of careful comparisons with similar notions in Plotinus, such as the Plotinian doctrine of intellect as image of the divine Intellect (which is, notwithstanding a few details, identical to Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* as intellect) and various facets of his epistemology (for example, Plotinus' differentiation of the λόγος and the νοῦς). Such an examination reveals how Augustine used these elements of Plotinus' epistemology as a model and how he integrated them into his biblical exegesis. Additionally, the evolution from his doctrine of the image from *Gen. litt.* to *Trin.* becomes most striking when comparing the epistemologies of the two thinkers. At the same time, the comparisons reveal Augustine's increased knowledge of Plotinus' philosophy, as demonstrated in *Trin.*

4.3 *The Plotinian Influence in Augustine's Doctrine: from General to Specific*

The premise that Plotinus' philosophy was of profound influence on Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* has an interesting background and history. Yet because this topic branches out in all directions, it is impossible to give it adequate treatment here. Its commencement involved questioning the philosophical sources of the early church fathers and judging the theological consequences of their application; as well as searching for answers to such

36 Brachtendorf corrects himself in a later publication: 'Time, Memory and Selfhood in *De Trinitate*'.

questions as to what works of which Christians did it begin and when the interest in Greek philosophy in early Christian thought ceased.

Even if we narrow down the inquiry to only Augustine and Platonism, the researcher will become quickly snowed down by the amount of commentary, due to the sprawling nature of various inquiries. Some researchers, such as Roland Kany, Ronald Rombs and James McEvoy, have painstakingly attempted to provide an overview of the history of Augustine-Platonist research.³⁷

Due to the magnitude of this task, the most recommendable path to pursue here is for me to give my limited, simplified impression of this topic and start at the beginning of the twentieth century when this research went on the rise, limiting the discussion to the factors relevant to my own research. The subject of Augustine's Platonism became popular when more and more researchers turned their attention to the *libri platoniorum* to which Augustine refers in *Conf.* VII.9.13, 20.26: to the Platonist books which Augustine read during his stay in Milan, between the end of his Manichaean period and before his conversion (ca. 384–386) between the age of 30 and 32. In these passages, he compares what he at that time read in the Platonist books to what he had read in the prologue of the Gospel of John. Tackling this issue quickly raised a myriad of other inquiries, necessitating a broader research terrain. As far as my knowledge of this inquiry is concerned, three main questions were at large here: 1. The question as to the precise identity of the authors of the *libri platoniorum* which Augustine refers to in *Conf.* VII;³⁸ 2., the estimation of Augustine's knowledge of Platonism at any certain period of his life, and 3. to what extent Augustine's familiarity with Platonism was transmitted or transformed by authors, whether non-Christian or Christian, or other sources, such as doxographies.

37 Kany's work serves as a handbook on the present state of research (2007). He provides an objective *status quaestionis* for *De Trinitate* on a large array of contemporary research questions. Kany's exposition on philosophical sources is extensive. *Augustins Trinitätsdenken Bilanz, Kritik und Weiterführung der modernen Forschung zu "De Trinitate"*. Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 22 (Tübingen, 2007) 131–175, 247–271.

Rombs provides a *status quaestionis* of the issues from the past century in the *Quellenforschung*. He mainly discusses the arguments of the issue regarding Augustine's Platonic source, Plotinus or Porphyry? Romb's intention in this book is not so much to give his own answer to the question of which treatises from the *Enneads* Augustine may have read but to discuss the controversial conclusions of R.J. O'Connell (from around 1970) who posited rather adamantly a number of treatises of Plotinus as Augustine's sole Platonic source. *Saint Augustine and the Fall of the Soul* (Washington, 2006) 26–32; J.J. McEvoy, 'Neo-Platonism and Christianity', 155–170.

38 For a concise history of this issue, see M. Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin suivi de Plotin face aux Gnostiques* (Paris, 2006) 43–76; F. van Fleteren, 'Porphyry', *AttA*, 661–663. The responses are so numerous that they cannot be listed in their entirety.

As regards the first question, researchers and especially classicists, initially attempted to locate passages in Augustine's works which semantically and qua terminology conform with passages in the *Enneads*. This hairsplitting investigation demanded expertise in both Latin and Greek.³⁹ Criticism of this method was soon to be heard: it was recognized that Augustine's assimilation of Platonist conceptions was so tightly interwoven into his thinking that attempts to extract Platonist themes from them by zeroing in on individual passages produced dissatisfying results. It was argued that conceptual comparisons should be considered legitimate for providing responses to these questions. One of the many ambitious researchers to pursue this task was Paul Henry, who in 1938 delivered to the satisfaction of many a convincing testimony for Augustine having read the *Enneads*.⁴⁰

Yet the satisfaction was not shared by everyone. These studies were solely focused on Plotinus, why not Porphyry? The answer seemed obvious: because the *Enneads* are available in their entirety and only fragments remain of Porphyry's once extensive oeuvre. Research on Porphyry might have been laden with interpretative difficulties, yet the unfortunate situation acted as a catalyst, stimulating the challenge to adequately reconstruct this philosopher's thought. As such, 'the Plotinus/Porphyry debate' came to life. For a number of decades, the two camps locked horns. Prominent scholars and proponents of Porphyry included Pierre Hadot, Willie Theiler and Henrich Dörrie. These researchers succeeded in producing interesting theories (based upon reconstruction assumptions), yet over the course of time, their studies did not ultimately lead to a consensus.

To bring this complicated issue to a close, it suffices to say that these days, most researchers are willing to concede that these questions are genuinely aporetic: Augustine's main Platonist source (or the books he read and referred to *Conf.* VII) could have easily been Plotinus or Porphyry or both (or even numerous other possibilities).⁴¹ Perhaps all these questions will never be suffi-

39 Such as A. Solignac's 'Ce que Augustin dit avoir lu de Plotin', *BA* 13, 682–689.

40 P. Henry, e.g., *La vision d'Ostie. Sa place dans la vie et l'œuvre de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1938). In 1937, Henry asserted that Augustine assimilated the Νοῦς of Plotinus to the Λόγος of the Fourth Gospel ['Augustine and Plotinus', *Journal of Theological Studies* 38 (1937) 20].

41 A recent publication shows that the two camps are apparently still in existence: the volume 'Augustin: la question de l'image', published in 2009 by editor I. Bochet, containing articles supporting the thesis that Porphyry was the main Neo-Platonist source for Augustine's doctrine of *imago Dei* [*Archives de Philosophie. Recherche et Documentation* Tome 72 (2009) Cahier 2] e.g., I. Bochet, 'Présentation' and 'Le statut de l'image dans la pensée augustinienne', 195–198, 240–271; S. Toulouse, 'Influences néoplatoniciennes sur l'analyse augustinienne des *visiones*', 225–248.

ciently answered.⁴² Whatever the case, delving into the philosophic sources of Augustine's major doctrinal works remains an intriguing question, stimulating lively investigations.

Among the many responses to the question of the *libri platoniorum* in *Conf.* VII, there is one which received much applause: the Platonist books which Augustine read were treatises from Plotinus' *Enneads*, and the Son of God Augustine was referring to was this famous philosopher's hypostatic Νοῦς. This has been endorsed by a number of prominent researchers such as Otto Perler, Michel Fattal, etc.⁴³ Interesting to note here is that this premise plays an important role in my article on the influence of Plotinus' Λόγος on Augustine's *Verbum Dei*. I argue there that Plotinus' conception of the Λόγος corresponded to Augustine's *Verbum* in some respects more precisely than the Νοῦς. This was because Plotinus' Νοῦς was said to always remain in the intelligible world, having no contact with matter, which was not true for the notion of the Λόγος nor Augustine's *Verbum Dei*. This important observation, which is integrated into the present monograph, deserves recognition in Augustinian research.⁴⁴

Noteworthy to mention in the context above is the scholarly consensus as to which books Augustine likely had read: *Enneads* I.6 *On Beauty* and V.1 *On the Three Primary Hypostases*. For Augustine's dependence on Plotinus' epistemology, the treatises: V.3 *On the Knowing Hypostases and That Which is Beyond* and V.5 *That the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect, and on the Good*, among others, are generally acknowledged.

The specific questions revolving around the *libri platoniorum* usually have limited relevance to contemporary studies on the Plotinian influence on Augustine. But this does not mean we can wholly abandon them. Contemporary Augustinian scholars stand on the shoulders of researchers who in the past undertook these challenges. Because of the sole focus on Plotinus here in a

42 I refer to Robert Crouse as one of many authors on this topic: 'Paucis Mutatis Verbis', 37–50.

43 I.e., O. Perler, *Der Nus bei Plotin und das Verbum bei Augustinus als vorbildliche Ursache der Welt* (Paderborn, 1930) 23–25, 31, 47, 72–74; Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin*, 83–88; J. Brachtendorf, *Augustins Confessiones* (Darmstadt, 2005) 130–131; J.M. Quinn, *A Companion to the Confessions of Augustine* (New York, 2002) 360–366.

Among the opponents of this consensus is e.g., V. Boland, who deems the differences between the two thinkers' conceptions of the Godhead as too radical for meriting plausibility. 'In fact Augustine seems to be unaware of the nature of Plotinus' hypostases.' Boland argues that Augustine may have assimilated the One and the Intellect in his thinking, e.g., in *Div. qu.* 23. (LZ: incorrect reference) but maintains that this did not survive long in this thinking. [*Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, Source and Synthesis* (Leiden, 1995) 87].

44 N.b., the researchers noted above.

study such as this, the researcher cannot endeavor to do more than to show in a more extensive and thorough way, how alive the Plotinian presence in Augustine is. The premise that Plotinus, as opposed to Porphyry, was Augustine's main Platonist source will have to be attended to more deeply in a forthcoming publication.

Although the majority of Augustinian researchers do acknowledge a Plotinian or Neo-Platonist influence on Augustine's doctrines to some degree, examples from *Enn.* or explanations provided are often obligatory standard tokens; such as solely mentioning the Platonist ascent as example of the Plotinian influence in Augustine and then treating only one of Augustine's iconic accounts of his own ascent from *Conf.*⁴⁵ Paulina Remes justifiably claims that there are many studies on Plotinus carried out for the sake of understanding Augustine which leave much to be desired.⁴⁶

For the reasons stated above, a rigorous selection of literature must be made for this study. All the same, there are excellent studies dealing with the particular inquiries of this study, such as for the material on Plotinus, articles and works written by E.K. Emilsson, Agnes Pigler and A.H. Armstrong.⁴⁷ Besides having been one of the bastions in the field of ancient philosophy, Armstrong was also for many years the peerless translator of the *Enneads*, a source which serves as one of the support pillars of this study. For nearly all topics and subtopics, my research has also been dependent on the studies of the most notable expert on Augustine, Platonism and in particular on Augustine's Platonism. John Rist is not only knowledgeable of the greater part of Augustine's oeuvre, including *Trin.*, but also of the entire *Enneads*, the works of Plato and many other ancient philosophers and church fathers. Rist has written most extensively on the influence of Plotinus' philosophy on Augustine's thought, such as in his classic *Ancient Thought Baptized* (1984).⁴⁸ Yet there are many more recent publications from this author used here which will be mentioned below.

Let us now undertake specific topics peculiar to this monograph, to begin with, the topic of imaging; and subsequently, the main topics treated in Chapters 7–11. These were: epistemology, the themes of love and the ascent and lastly, Augustine's Christian Platonism.

45 A few examples: Lagouanère, *Intériorité* and Gioia, *Epistemology*.

46 Paulina Remes, *Plotinus on Self, The Philosophy of the We* (Cambridge, 2007) 19.

47 Armstrong, e.g., *Enneads*. See the bibliography for many of his other publications relevant to this study; Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect* (Oxford, 2007); Agnès Pigler, *Plotin une métaphysique de l'amour, L'amour comme structure du monde intelligible* (Paris, 2002).

48 *Ancient Thought Baptized* (New York, 1994).

4.4 *On Images and Imaging*

On Plotinus' system of images, we have a good supply of literature.⁴⁹ Plotinus did not write a particular treatise on this theme; images and imaging pervades the whole *Enneads*. Most studies concentrate on one particular aspect (or aspects) thus do not attempt to piece together Plotinus' whole system of images, imaging and Ideas, in the way this monograph does. Then there is the influence of Plotinus' system of images in Augustine. It is also not difficult to locate literature on this topic, only the bulk of it does not go beyond a well-intended mention which is lacking substantiations and nuances. See the many examples given in the note below.⁵⁰

A recent excellent publication on Augustine's early doctrine image of God by Gerard Boersma can be said to be a rare exception to this and thus meriting praise. While demonstrating how Augustine upholds the consensus of the fourth century councils on the Christian creed, Boersma illustrates in a solid, satisfying way how the Plotinian doctrine of image manifests in Augustine's early thinking. He reinforces this with ample passages from Plotinus' work, the *Enneads*, demonstrating his keen understanding of this Platonist's thought. The differences between the work of Boersma and mine—is that his study zooms

49 E.g., P. Aubin, 'L'image dans l'œuvre de Plotin', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* XLI (1953) 367–370; R. Ferwerda, *La signification des images et des métaphores dans la pensée de Plotin* (Dissertation, RUG University of Groningen, 1965); A.H. Armstrong, 'Platonic Mirrors', in: *Hellenic and Christian Studies* (Hampshire UK, 1990) 147–181; M. Fattal, *Logos et image chez Plotin* (Paris, 1998); *ibidem*, *Image, mythe, logos et raison* (Paris, 2009) 35–62; Bochet, 'Imago'; J.-F. Pradeau, *L'imitation de principe. Plotin et la participation* (Paris, 2003) especially 69–70; Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology of Image*, 135–154.

50 For example, I. Bochet mentions Plotinus in her article 'Imago' and in fact provides the most extensive treatment, as well as helpful references. However the references to the *Enneads* in her article are mainly short in content and are not elaborated (509). J. Sullivan's two-page treatment in his work on Augustine's doctrine of the image of God is likewise too general (*Image of God*, 5–7 and 10, 14–15).; Lagouanère's likewise excellent work on Augustine's doctrine of the image containing a section on this topic bears the encouraging title 'L'influence néo-platonicienne sur la théologie augustinienne de l'image'. Yet this does not contribute any new insights on this matter. His treatment of the Neo-Platonist influences does not go any further than the most basic Plotinian influences, such as ἀνάβασις and ἐπιστροφή, which are the most frequently mentioned and least controversial aspects in Augustinian-Plotinian studies. (*Intériorité*. 443–447); Other studies listed here mention the influence of Plotinus' system of imaging on Augustine's doctrine of creation, but do not always elaborate on it in detail, such as M. Clark's 'Imago Dei', *AttA*, 440–442; I. Koch's doctoral thesis, 'Image et dissemblance: étude sur la notion d'image chez Plotin et Saint Augustin' (Paris, 1997), sounds promising, yet this treatment is too general to be useful for my analysis. Furthermore it deals predominantly with the images on the material level of existence, hardly touching upon the mystagogical aspects with which my study is engaged.

in on the young Augustine, mine on the older. In spite of the fact that Boersma does not make the connection of *imago Dei* and intellect in Augustine's works, nor the influence of Plotinus and his doctrine of intellect, I nonetheless regard my study as complementary to Boersma's.

4.5 *Epistemology*

There are few comprehensive studies which rigorously compare Augustine's epistemology in *Trin.* (his accumulative doctrine) with that of Plotinus, to the extent this monograph does. Fragmentary studies are usually more abundant; fragmentary in the sense that they focus on particular aspects of Augustine's epistemology in *Trin.* (not the whole of it) and likewise only on a part of Plotinus'. However, these studies attest to high quality scholarship. These individual aspects are treated in Chapter 7 and for that reason a *status quaestionis* would not be practical here. Suffice it to say, that this study has been dependent on the studies of Brachtendorf, and others, such as J. Pépin.⁵¹

Plotinus, as the philosophic source for Augustine's epistemology, is generally never contested. The illustration of Augustine's use of Plotinus' notion of intellect-image (in Chapter 7.3) corroborates the established consensus of not only Augustine's dependence on Plotinus' epistemology but also of certain treatises from *The Enneads*.⁵² Yet it offers new insights as well, such as the following: Augustine's epistemology neatly conforms to Plotinus' designations of the human mind (of the λόγος and the νοῦς) to such an extent that it is evident that he strived to model not just his epistemology but also his interpretation of the image of God and the rational soul on the same doctrines of Plotinus, without undermining their Christian character. While composing his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, Augustine was likely pondering Plotinus' depiction of the imaging of the entire Godhead by the human intellect. Especially evident here is Augustine's consideration for the inconsistencies in Plotinus' epistemology and psychology (mentioned above) which was doubtlessly the impulse for Augustine's repeated emphasis in *Trin.* on the difference between the *imago Trinitatis* and the *Sancta Trinitas* (the Creator with the creaturely). These serve to discretely provide a Christian correction of Plotinus.

51 J. Pépin, 'Le tout et les parties dans la connaissance de la *mens* par elle-même (*De Trin.* x, 3, 5–4,6)', in: J. Brachtendorf, *Gott und Sein Bild*, 105–126.

52 On the consensus of *Enneads* v.1, v.3. and v.5: J. Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 20–24, 28–29, 35–note 89; Ayres, 'Discipline', 263, note 7; Pépin, 'Le tout et les parties', 105–126; C. Tornau, 'The Background of Augustine's Triadic Epistemology in *De Trinitate* 11–15, A Suggestion', in: Bermon, *Trinitate*, 251–266.

4.6 *On Love*

Both Augustine and Plotinus have written much on the theme of love and not surprisingly, there exists an abundance of literature on both authors, individually. (The sources are included in the notes in the respective chapters of this book.⁵³) However, studies on the doctrines of both thinkers together is drastically limited. The discussion of the Greek ἔρως on the early Christian conception of love skyrocketed especially after the publication of Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros* in 1932–1939. Nygren's thesis was rebuked by, among others, Augustinian experts, J. Burnaby and J. Rist.⁵⁴ This work was not of use to this study, due to its essentially incorrect premise of the ἔρως.⁵⁵ Some researchers do acknowledge or refer to the influential role of the Platonic notion of ἔρως as Augustine's non-biblical source for his doctrine of love in *Trin*. Yet his doctrine is seldom discussed in-depth; Plotinus' notion of love is rarely explained in its entirety. The exception to this are the studies of John Rist.⁵⁶

Rist is the most prominent author on the influence of Plotinus' notion of ἔρως on Augustine's doctrine of love. In the first three chapters of a recent publication (*Augustine Deformed*, 2014), he deals with Augustine's dependence on Plotinus' ἔρως for his conception of *amor* and *voluntas*. Plotinus' ἔρως is not just referred to but treated as one of Augustine's main philosophical sources. However Rist's inquiry is more focused on Augustine's notion of *voluntas*. Augustine does indeed fuse his notion of love with *voluntas* in *Trin*. Yet, as in many cases with Augustine's fusions and equations of terminology, the one term is nonetheless not identical to the other. For this reason, Rist's

53 Chapter 3.4 (on Plotinus) and Chapter 5.3 (on Augustine).

54 J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei, A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (Eugene, 1938, 1991, 2007); J. Rist *Eros and Psyche, Studies in Plato, Plotinus and Origen* (Toronto, 1967) 79–87.

55 Nygren argued, in a nutshell, that the Christian focus on ἀγάπη—a self-giving and self-sacrificial kind of love—became diluted by St. Augustine and other medieval thinkers who had synthesized their conception of *caritas* with the Greek philosophic ἔρως. In doing so, Nygren incorrectly typified the meaning of the term ἔρως as an egocentric and acquisitive kind of love, need and desire-based, which he derived from the works of Plato and Plotinus.

56 J. Rist, *Augustine Deformed*, 64–65; *ibidem*, 'Love and Will around *De Trinitate* xv.20.38', in: Brachtendorf, *Gott, Bild*, 210; *Eros and Psyche*, 79–87; *Ancient Thought Baptized*, 148–202, 153–156. In the latter, his treatment involves Augustine's *amor* in the context of Plato's *Symposium*. It does not always focus on *amor* in *Trin*. viii–x; R.J. Teske describes Augustine's conception of love in *Trin*. The influence of Plotinus is mentioned but not the notion of ἔρως ('Augustine's inversion of 1John 4:8', *Augustinian Studies* 39.1 (2008) 49–60); The same can be said of Burnaby's *Amor Dei*, where the influence of Plotinus on Augustine is at least treated. ἔρως is only mentioned on p. 162 in the context of the love of the One, but is only contrasted with Augustine's notion of the Trinitarian Godhead.

explication of Augustine's doctrines of will and love does not provide the full picture of the correspondences between Augustine's *amor* in *Trin.* and Plotinus' Ἔρως. Another exception is C. Tornau's concise article '*Eros versus Agape*' (2005) which also addresses the same issue concerning Augustine's doctrine in *Trin.* IX–X.⁵⁷ Because of the lack of literature on this specific topic, this study, with its comparisons of divine love, human love, love and knowledge, love and the ascent not only supplements the studies of Rist and Tornau, but due to its extensiveness, provides groundbreaking work as well.

4.7 *The Ascent*

There is no other topic concerning Augustine's indebtedness to Plotinus which has received more attention than the ascent of the soul. As already mentioned, the bulk of this literature usually deals with Augustine's accounts in *Conf.* VII.9.13 and Plotinian notions such as ἀνάβασις, ἐπιστροφή, etc.⁵⁸ I have not been able to locate literature specifically dealing with the influence of Plotinus on Augustine's accounts in *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.*, as these are generally integrated into expositions on the intellect, the image of God.⁵⁹ Therefore a *status quaestionis* on these issues would prove tedious.

4.8 *Augustine's Christian Platonism*

The final general topic of importance here is the specific theme of Chapter 11. Parallel to the issue of the *libri platoniorum*, there has been a great deal of

57 C. Tornau, '*Eros versus Agape? Von Plotins Eros zum Liebesbegriff Augustins*', in: *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft* 112 (2005) 271–291; *ibidem*, 'Does Love Make Us Beautiful? A Criticism of Plotinus in Augustine's Tractates on the first Epistle of John', *Millennium* 4 (1), 93–105. Tornau's reference to the triad of love in *Trin.* VIII and the triad *mens-notitia-amor* in *Trin.* IX is brief (at the end of his article pp. 288–289), hence not as extensive as the analysis here. Yet by no means is it less instructive. An interesting similarity between Tornau's work and mine, is the dependence upon *Enn.* VI.7 for Plotinus' doctrine of Ἔρως, a treatise in which I have also found many agreements to Augustine's doctrine in *Trin.* This is not often recognized in Augustinian-Plotinian literature.

58 E.g., R. Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse, Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris, 1962) e.g., IV. La spéculation téléologique de Plotin; F. van Fleteren, 'The Ascent to God', *AttA*, 63–67; *ibidem*, 'Mysticism in the *Confessiones*, A Controversy Revisited', in: F. van Fleteren, J.C. Schnaubelt, J. Reino (eds.) *Collectanea Augustiniana Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue* (New York, 1994) 309–336. A.J.P. Kenny, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading the Confessions* (New York, 2005).

59 Brachtendorf does treat the ascent in *Trin.* and in Plotinus but not together. *Struktur: Plotinus: 24–48, Augustine, e.g., 121–126, 194–199.* His treatment of intellectual vision from *Gen. litt.* XII does provide a comparison with Plotinus (48–55).

interest in defining Augustine's relationship to Platonist philosophy. In spite of the sea of publications on this topic, there is virtually no literature which focuses on Augustine's Christian Platonism specifically regarding his doctrines of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*. This leaves the door ajar for me to pursue the question of the characterization of Augustine by predominantly dipping into the quarry of my own material. The conclusions of Chapter 10 in which the major differences and similarities between the two thinkers are established, provide ample material for speculation on this theme. I do make use of a limited selection of authors, such as McEvoy, Rombs, Armstrong and Rist to reinforce my own conjectures.⁶⁰

This analysis produces surprising results. It includes responses to such questions as to where Augustine, conceptually speaking, should be placed into the Platonist tradition. Which brand of Platonism did he feel an affinity for? Or an aversion to? Why did Augustine refrain from attacking the true theurgist-Neo-Platonists of his day? It is highly likely that Augustine saw Porphyry as the propagator of a Platonist heresy: that Porphyry's students, the later Platonist-theurgists, excessively deviated from the doctrine of Plato. This chapter will provide an original contribution to scholarship which will hopefully be of use to future studies as well.

One of the conclusions of this study is the rebuttal of the contention that *Trin.* was written primarily as a Platonist polemic. The problem with such a statement, which is employed often in scholarly literature, is that these researchers use the term 'Platonists' as if Augustine regarded them all as one and the same, thus disregarding the distinctions in the Platonist tradition itself. Furthermore, on the basis of the results of this study, I hesitate to pin the tag of 'Augustine's opponent' onto Plotinus. This tag is more suitable for Porphyry and the later Neo-Platonists.

The most striking divergences between both thinkers, pinpointed in Chapter 11, appear in Augustine's doctrine of love. Compared to Plotinus' doctrine of Ἔρως, Augustine brought personal and human spiritual love more into the foreground by promoting the extension of divine love directly into the sphere of human relations. Additionally, Augustine showed much more concern for

60 The following were most relevant for my discussions in Chapter 11: A.H. Armstrong, 'St. Augustine and Christian Platonism', in: R.A. Markus (ed.) *Augustine, A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York, 1972) 5–37; A.P. Bos, *Geboeid door Plato. Het christelijk geloof bekend door het glinsterend pantser van de Griekse filosofie* (Kampen, 1996); McEvoy, 'Neo-Platonism and Christianity', 155–170; and J. Rist, 'Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', *CCP* 1996, 386–414.

experiencing worshipping and praying to God on a communal basis. These distinctions are a direct result of Augustine's biblical orientation.

4.9 *The End of Augustine's Interest in Greek Philosophy?*

There are some major ongoing misunderstandings which this monograph should definitely clear up. As Augustine tells us in *Conf.*, he spent a large portion of his younger adult years studying Greek philosophy. When he was ordained a Catholic priest (in 391 at age 37), the presiding bishop requested the already famous speaker, publicist and rhetorician to take over preaching duties. Yet Augustine balked, claiming his knowledge of the scriptures insufficient for composing sermons. Thus in order to oblige the bishop, intensive bible study and subsequently biblical exegesis became his main literary activities.⁶¹ This story seems to suggest that his new interest in the bible was at the expense of his interest in Greek philosophy. Or at least that is the dominating opinion:⁶² scholars tend to drive an incision here in his career: from that point on, Augustine was purely a theologian, a defender of Christianity and later the bishop of Hippo.

In adhering to this view, these authors neglect his writings in *Civ. Dei*, a work which was published long after *Conf.* *Civ. Dei* is indeed an anti-pagan work, yet it is here where Augustine praised many aspects of Plato or Platonist teachings, and even claims much common ground between Platonist and Christian doctrines. Compared to *Conf.*, *Civ. Dei* is striking for its vast familiarity with the history of Greek philosophy and Platonism, but also for its referral to the Platonist philosophers by name. One could contend that Augustine might have studied Platonism after his writing of *Conf.* for the sole purpose of accurately refuting them in *Civ. Dei*. But when we look closely at his appraisal of Platonism in *Civ. Dei*, we also detect that the Platonist conceptions which he praised in *Civ. Dei* are generally the same as those which he integrated into in his own writings. These elements are prominent even in a later work, such as *Trin.*

In sum, in engaging with two of his major works written long after 391, this study reveals that the 'Plotinian flavor' is as strong as it ever was; Augustine remains a Platonist through and through, filing down the rough edges of doctrines prevailing throughout the Platonist tradition. Augustine never rejected, distanced himself or ceased to consult Plotinian philosophy. He would have found Plotinus a more favorable Platonist than Porphyry, as corroborated in *Civ. Dei* by his lack of direct critique of the former. Furthermore, *De Trinitate*

61 *Ep.* 21.57.3–58.6 (written in 391).

62 E.g., 'After ordination (391) the Plotinian flavor diminishes.' Anne-Marie Bowery, 'Plotinus, *The Enneads*', *Atta*, 654–657; 655.

cannot be designated as a polemic against Platonism or the Platonist tradition as a whole. In light of Augustine's implicit discontent with the idealism in Plotinus' doctrine of the human intellect, it is still possible to assert that Augustine's teachings, like those of his Platonist mentor, advocated an optimistic theology.

Augustine's Appraisal of Plotinus' Philosophy

In order to study Augustine's relationship to Plotinus' philosophy and characterize him as 'Christian Platonist', we will now focus on Augustine's commentary on Platonism. Scattered throughout his whole oeuvre, sometimes it occurs in short passages, such as in *De beata vita* (1.4) or *Contra academicos* (III.18). Yet his major treatments are concentrated in *Conf.* VII–VIII, *Civ. Dei* VIII–X and *Trin.* IV. Augustine's appraisal of Platonism in these works will serve as the focal point of this chapter, treated in the order above. A survey of his praise as well as his critique will reveal not only why he rejected certain Platonist notions but also why he preferred others, which he ultimately utilized to reinforce his doctrine of *imago Dei/Trinitatis*.

1 Augustine's Accounts of Platonism in *Confessions*

Augustine's autobiography¹ in books III–VII of *Confessions*² relays how he initially came into contact with Platonist literature. It is of particular interest to this study because it contains his descriptions of the different ideologies which he encountered in his late twenties up to the time he embraced Catholicism. These aspects of his intellectual development are useful for understanding facets of his conversion, which in turn are relevant to his doctrinal development of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*. The first part of this chapter will commence with the period of his life as a young member of the Manichaean church

- 1 Researchers have questioned the historicity of certain autobiographical elements of *Conf.* (e.g., Boissier and Harnack 1888, Courcelle 1950) suggesting that the story of his conversion is a reworking of ancient literature traditions. For an overview of this debate, see A. Kotzé, *Augustine's Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience* (Leiden, *Supplement to Vigiliae Christianae*, 2004) 11–12; J.J. O'Meara, 'Augustine's Confessions, Elements of Fiction' in: J. McWilliam (ed.) *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian* (Waterloo, 1992) 77–95; O'Donnell discusses '... Augustinian self-fashioning, the way the mature Augustine created his own literary and public persona, attached to it a highly selective account of his early life, and both maintained and propagated that persona into succeeding generations.' (J.J. O'Donnell, 'Three Studies in Augustinian Biography', 1999: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/newlife.html>).
- 2 *Confessionum libri XIII*; CCL 27, English translation: H. Chadwick, *Confessions by Augustine*, with introduction and notes by H. Chadwick (Oxford, 1992, re-issued 2008). *Conf.* was written between the years 397–401. P. Brown's chronology: *Augustine of Hippo, A Biography* (London, 1967; Berkeley, 2000) 182.

and with a short exposition on Manichaeism. Then we will proceed to his first alleged readings of the Platonist books and his positive reactions to certain philosophical concepts. His subsequent disappointment with Platonism spurred him onward to search further for ultimate truth and wisdom elsewhere, which he discovered while attending mass in the Catholic Church in Milan in the pastorate of Bishop Ambrose.

1.1 *Augustine and Manichaeism*

Already at age 19,³ Augustine had become a talented, promising professor of rhetoric. While reading Cicero's work *Hortensius*, he became deeply impressed by this author's conception of true happiness; this cannot be found by pursuing worldly ambitions as fame and honor (which were indeed Augustine's goals at that time), but only by searching for immortal wisdom. True life according to Cicero was not the world as perceived by the senses but that of the inner world of the mind. Reading this work represented a milestone in Augustine's life: it awakened in him the longing for more profound knowledge and subsequently, the search for this became Augustine's new goal in life. To begin this search, he, as catechumen, naturally turned to the Holy Scriptures (*Conf.* 111.5). Yet in contrast to Cicero's refined and erudite account, the style and language of the bible came across to him as primitive and lacking dignity, certainly not the place to seek eternal wisdom (v.6.10). Yet having been raised a Christian, Augustine admitted his regret that Cicero's exposition on wisdom did not include (and of course could not have included) the name of Christ (*Conf.* 111.7.8).

In 373, he became acquainted with some followers of the Babylonian prophet Mani (ca. 216–276) in his hometown Thagaste, who gave him the distinct impression that these teachings could offer him the immortal sagacity he was looking for. Their wisdom, which indeed exceeded earthly concerns, encompassed—among other things—the teachings of Christ, a critical interpretation of the bible as well as a synthesis of various world religions of the day.⁴ Young Augustine was so sold that he became an auditor three days later and remained as such for nine years (up until he was about 28 years old in 382).

Now we will take a closer look at Manichaeism in the brief exposé below. But first a few introductory remarks on Augustine's commentary on this religion. In *Conf.*, Augustine gives us a full-scale report on what he rejected in the teachings of Mani. He wrote his autobiography (397–401: dating is Brown's) while in

3 The year was 373. In autumn of this year he became a professor in Thagaste, offering lessons in grammar and rhetoric.

4 Manicheans were generally more sympathetic towards the New Testament (*Conf.* 111.6.10, v.11.21). The Old Testament, was wholly rejected (*Conf.* 111.7.12).

function as bishop of Hippo, in the midst of his debates with Manichaeans.⁵ At this time, he was a fiery opponent of Manichaeism. Augustine expresses little praise for Manichaeism; what praise he would have had, must be inferred, as articulated below in this section (in for example 'Attractive Elements in Manichaeism'). In *Civ. Dei*, which will be consulted in section 2, Augustine presents himself as an avid opponent of certain aspects of Platonism as well. Yet in comparison to his treatment of the Manichaeans in *Conf.*, Augustine was generous in his praise for Platonism. Because he shows us clearly in *Conf.* the role Platonist philosophy played in his rejection of the tenets of the Manichaean sect, the following exposition on Manichaeism will highlight the perspective of Augustine's Platonistic affiliation. (This perspective will be discussed in the upcoming subsections.)

The brief summary of Manichaean cosmology below is however not derived from *Conf.*, due to the fact that Augustine does not provide us with a sufficient overview of Manichaean theology in this or any other of his works.⁶ It was necessarily composed by weaving together the summaries of a number of researchers on Manichaeism, who have utilized a variety of ancient authors (such as Manichaeans and from other works of Augustine).⁷

1.2 *Manichaean Salvation and Ascent to the Light*

According to the founder, Mani, humans have a mission to fulfill in this world: to contribute to the return of divine light particles to the Realm of Light. The

5 His first anti-Manichaean treatise was: *Gen. adu. Man.* (388–389). His last: *Contra Secundinum Manichaeum* (404) (dating is Brown's).

6 The brevity of this exposé may ultimately raise more questions than can be answered here. What is known about Manichaeism today is based upon reconstructions from a multitude of ancient sources from widespread regions and languages. Augustine's anti-Manichaean works provide much reliable material for this reconstruction, yet are still nonetheless questionable. Augustine's information, in particular his evaluation of this religion (as well as that from other church fathers) has been questioned increasingly of its validity since the latter half of the previous century (see note 23).

7 Besides *Conf.*, various anti-Manichaean works of Augustine are used for reconstructing the Manichaean religion, such as: *Contra Felicem Manichaeum*, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, *Contra Secundinum Manichaeum*, *Contra Epistulam Manichaei quam vocant fundamenti*, *Confessiones*, *Epistula 7*, *De haeresibus*, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus manichaeorum*; in addition to these, a few purely Manichaean sources: *Kephalaia*, *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis* (= *CMC* or *Cologne Codex*). For a complete treatment of these as well as other Manichaean sources: see i.e., V.H. Drecoll and M. Kudella, *Augustin und der Manichäismus* (Tübingen, 2011) 15–21; J. van Oort, *Jerusalem Babylon, A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden, Supplement to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 1991) 201–207. More recently, R. van Vliet, 'Gnostischer Adoptionismus in der manichaischen Christologie' (Dissertation, VU University, Amsterdam 2014).

need for this mission is explained in a lengthy, complicated creation myth which was communicated to Mani by divine revelation. The myth, given here in an overly simplified version, is as follows: before our world existed, two forces prevailed: the divine Good and Light on the one hand and matter and darkness on the other. When the dark forces launched an attack on the realm of the Good, war broke out between them. Due to the ensuing battles in this realm, remnants of the divine light were captured in the territory of darkness. Divine beings schemed up strategies and counterattacks which would trick the beings of the dark forces into surrendering the captured light. One of these schemes involved convincing the dark forces of the necessity of creating a world with human beings. These were in fact the products of an evil demiurge and thus created from the dark matter which contained imprisoned light. The overall effect was that all creatures and created things were composed of a mixture of light and darkness, good and evil. Only the sun and the moon were created by the good demiurges of Light. This war would supposedly persist until the end of time, when all light particles would be brought back to the Light Kingdom. Then everything associated with the kingdom of Darkness (which included all matter and selfish and aggressive desires) would be rendered entirely inactive.

Manichaeans believed that the particles of light which had been scattered over the earth during this war dwell in all things and would be rendered to the Realm of Light by a gradual purification process. This process involved the transport of light particles to the moon. When the moon was full, it would empty these particles into the sun, from where they would be elevated to the 'new Aeon'.⁸ The salvation of these particles is the responsibility of humans and is likewise involved with the salvation of humanity. Redemption can begin to take place once a redeemer reveals the truth of the pre-creational circumstances and the human mission in the world. This secret knowledge itself or *gnosis* γνῶσις originates from the Light world, referred to in some Greek texts as Νοῦς (spirit, mind or intellect). The universal redeemer could be Jesus or Mani (or another prophet from the past, such as Buddha) who makes known the reality of a formerly unknown Kingdom of Light as mankind's destiny. Equipped

8 E.g., *Ep.* 55. The sun and moon were associated with the manifestation of Jesus. Regarding the Manichaean sources as a whole, there were many versions of Jesus—perhaps as many as six or seven, as the sources can vary. The two most frequently occurring were: Jesus as Shimmering Light and as the Apostle of Light. Drecoll and Kudella specify three main Jesus types in the Manichaean cosmology. 1. *Iesus patibilis*: associated with the light particles trapped in matter on Earth, 2. the crucified Christ (who was not of flesh) and 3. Christ as Splendor associated with the sun and moon who was the representative of God's power in the sun (Drecoll-Kudella, *Augustin*, 24–26, 30, notes 53, 32). See also: S.G. Richter, 'Bemerkungen zu verschiedenen Jesus-figuren in Manichäismus', *A&M Latin West*, 174–184.

with γνῶσις, the individual obtains a new consciousness of the divine spark in the soul which connects him/her to the higher divine world. The individual acknowledges his or her life as a microcosm of this universal duality of light and darkness, good and evil. As Augustine put it, Manichaeans believed that one part of the soul contained this divine light and was good and divine; the other part of the soul was evil and dark.⁹

1.3 *Attractive Elements in Manichaeism*

Augustine felt attracted to Manichaeism for a number of reasons. Only a handful will be discussed briefly here which are relevant for the discussion of Augustine's relationship to Plotinus' philosophy.

After Augustine had read Cicero and had been set afire in search of immortal wisdom, he criticized Cicero's works for the absence of Christ. Yet he found Christ distinctly present in Mani's religion: as a bringer of gnosis and wisdom, a non-physical being of radiant light, manifesting in a visible form in the light of the heavens. This experience of Christ must have enhanced in some way his former experience of God as a Catholic catechumen as a boy.¹⁰ In Manichaean theology, the soul was the central point of human existence, it was where God, Light and truth (Νοῦς) manifested.¹¹ God was present in the soul at the very least in the form of a divine spark. After being illuminated with Christ's γνῶσις, the goal of the Manichaean was to return as a soul to God, to eternal life and become divine. In Augustine's later writings and in particular in his doctrine of *imago Dei/Trinitatis*, we also see his deep interest in the human soul and the

9 Cf., *The Two Souls (De duabus animabus)* Augustine described the Manichaean theory of two souls: the two *mentes*: one being good, the other evil. In *Conf.* he identified this theory with their postulation of two *voluntates* in each human (*Conf.* VIII.10.22); Many researchers have commented on the discrepancies between Augustine's descriptions and Manichaean texts. Cf., J. van Oort, 'Manichaean Christians in Augustine's Life and Work', *Church History and Religious Culture* 90.4 (2010) 505–546; 524–525; notes 105–110. See also C.G. Scibona, 'The Doctrine of the Soul in Manichaeism and Augustine', in: J.A. van den Berg, A. Kotzé, T. Nicklas and M. Scopello (eds.) *In Search of Truth: Augustine, Manichaeism and other Gnosticism, Studies for Johannes van Oort* (Leiden, 2011) 377–418.

10 He received instructed from his mother, Monica. For reconstructions of 4th century North African Christianity: Brown, *Augustine*, 19–27; Van Oort, *Jerusalem Babylon*, 30–31; and A. Hoffmann, 'Erst Einsehen dan Glauben. Die Nordafrikanischen Manichäer zwischen Erkenntnisanspruch, Glaubensforderung und Glaubenskritik', *A&M Latin West*, 67–112, 76–77. For Augustine's pre-Manichaean conceptions of God, see P.J.J. van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God, Augustine as Negative Theologian* (Liege, 2010) 42–45, 49–61.

11 See K. Rudolph, 'Augustinus Manichaicus—das Problem von Konstanz und Wandel', *A&M Latin West*, 1–15, 3; G. Quispel, *Das ewige Ebenbild des Menschen. Zur Begegnung mit dem Selbst in der Gnosis* (Sonderdruck aus *Eranos Jahrbuch xxxvi*) (Zürich, 1968).

emphasis on the spiritual, non-material aspects of human life through contact with God's illumination. His psychology contains a similar, general soteriological structure as the Manichean psychology described above: God manifests in the human soul in the form of pure Light; by turning inward to this light in one's soul, one makes contact with the divine in some way. The ascent to God is facilitated by assimilating this light, which includes acquiring some kind of knowledge of God and resembling the divine by making oneself good.¹² This notion of soul, in spite of Augustine's later criticism of it (such as being consubstantial with divine light), presumably did not leave him cold, at least not at first. The same elements attracted him later to Plotinus' psychology where the soul's ascent to God's Light was explicated in great detail.

The Manichaean way of thinking provided Augustine in his younger years with a ready answer to the question concerning the source of evil *unde malum*. Augustine perceived the Manichaean conception of evil as a distinct, hostile force of matter and darkness which manifested on the same plane of existence as the divine.¹³ It perpetrated itself equally in our world and in humans in the form of aggression and selfish desires. In this period of his life, Augustine found Mani's teaching interesting because—as he himself put it—humans were not considered the cause of evil. Consequently, individuals were acquitted from taking moral responsibility for their own wrongdoings (*Conf.* IV.3.4, V.10.18). The dualistic conception of God as Good and an opposing god as wickedness provided him as well with an explanation for why persons suffer: the benevolent God of Light was responsible for creating the supra-lunar world where all things were good; the dark forces who had created all things below the moon were the cause of egotistic passions and adversity.¹⁴ Augustine's later reading of Plotinus' conception of good and evil will change his view, which will be discussed below.

Manichaeans believed that once introduced to γνῶσις, humans possessed adequate insight to be able to diminish their own perpetuation of evil and purify their souls in order to return to God. According to Augustine, total self-control was required in Manichaeism and one's redemption fell essentially into

12 How can we account for Augustine's 'silent praise' of a particular Manichean tenet? See van Oort, *Jerusalem Babylon*, 54–56; Rudolph, 'Konstanz und Wandel', etc.

13 It is not clear whether Manichaeans always viewed the world itself as negative—as consisting of coarse matter and sheer evil, as Augustine reports in *Conf.* III.6.10; *Gen. adu. Man.* I.4.7; *Civ. Dei* XIV.5, etc. Researchers question as well whether Manichaeans indeed taught that the dark side of humans was pure evil in the way that Augustine depicted their teachings. See e.g., van Vliet, *Adoptianismus*, Kap. III.

14 E.g., van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 42–43.

one's own hands (*Conf.* VIII.10.22).¹⁵ This aspect was apparently appealing to him at this time as well.¹⁶ He likely also found the Manichaean revelation of γνῶσις and the 'rational'¹⁷ character of its religion attractive. Mani claimed to propagate a universal religion with tenets which were acceptable to intellectuals.¹⁸ Augustine sought a religion which would stimulate knowledge. These features led him doubtlessly to Platonism as well.¹⁹

- 15 Self-redemption included doing good works, such as purifying the evil (passions and desires) from the soul, and assisting in rituals in which light would be returned to the Highest God. Cf., e.g., R. van Vliet, *Adoptianismus*, Kap. 1.
- 16 I.e., van Oort, *Jerusalem Babylon*, 54–56; Augustine's concern with self-control can be detected in his doctrine of original sin in which he interprets one of the regretful punishments for the disobedience of Adam and Eve as being the diminished control over the body by the rational mind. Note also that grace of the *Verbum Dei* who heals the human will also plays a large role in this doctrine.
- 17 *Conf.* v.3.6. 'Rational' in the sense that it gave a plausible explanation for reality.
- 18 For discussions of the aspects which lent Manichaeism its reputed rational character, see van Oort, *Jerusalem Babylon*, 178; Drecoll-Kudella, *Augustin*, 28–30; Quispel, *Das ewige Ebenbild*, 20. These seem to point to elements in Greek philosophy or Neo-Platonic ontology or terminology. See Hoffmann ('Erst Einsehen', 77–85, 84–85) and note 19 below. The effort to make this religion appear rational can be seen in the myth itself, where a system is build up in triads, tetrads, pentads, dodecads, etc. (*ibidem*, 85, note 106) which is nonetheless distinguished from philosophy. Hoffmann remarks on the tension in Manichaeism between belief derived from Mani's revelation (*gnosis*) and the alleged rational elements. See also A.H. Armstrong 'Dualism: Platonic, Gnostic and Christian', in: D.T. Runia (ed.), *Plotinus amidst the Christians* (Amsterdam, 1984) 29–52.
- 19 The 'rational' aspects in Manichaeism also reveal a certain Platonic influence. A. Hoffmann reports the influence of Plato's theory of recollection: Manichaean *gnosis* draws up the recollection of the soul and its origins. It becomes 'reminded' of where it came from and of the misery which it presently faces (the consequences of sinning) and how one's evildoings, committed before *gnosis* was known, can now be rectified ('Erst Einsehen', 82–83, 99–100). Cf., *Contra Faustum* 20; other traces of Platonism include: the teleology of becoming a god (Quispel, *Das ewige Ebenbild*, 39); the Neo-Platonist hierarchy of Being and terminology pertaining to Νοῦς, Ψυχή and ὕλη (see i.e., *Cologne Codex*); the imaging of God by the human soul (see Quispel's speculation, 27–28); and the rejection of an anthropomorphic god. The Manichaean view on matter is similar to that of Plotinus in associating matter with potential evil. (N.b.: Plotinus did not posit the presence of evil in the Godhead.) For further reading on how Plotinus' conception of the 'self' can be detected in *Cologne Codex*: see C.L. Sweeney, 'Mani's Twin and Plotinus: Questions on Self', in: R.T. Wallis, J.A. Bregman (eds.), *Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism* (New York, 1992) 381–422. The three hierarchical emanations in the Manichaean cosmic myth are often compared to Plotinus' teaching of the three Hypostases. See Timothy Pettipiece, 'Many Faced Gods: Triadic (Proto-) Structure and Divine Androgyny in Early Manichaean Cosmogony', *De Gruyter, Open Access, Open Theology* 2015; 1: 245–254.

1.4 *Augustine's (Platonist) Critique of Manichaeism*

Within the nine or ten years spent as a Manichaean auditor, he gradually began to feel discontent with many of its tenets. This section will highlight several points of critique which he verbalized when writing *Conf.*, which were decisive in his renouncement of his membership. There are many possible points to discuss here, yet only a handful will be mentioned which will shed light on Augustine's relationship to Plotinus' philosophy and are relevant to the main inquiries of this study.

Augustine criticized his own conception of God while in his Manichaean phase²⁰ as being materialistic.²¹ The material factor of Manichaeism,²² he explained, involved the substance of the realms of Light and Darkness which possessed spatial dimension—a characteristic generally assumed of matter (*Conf.* VI.1.2).²³ The Kingdom of Light consisted of fine spiritual material, comparable to the visible light we see in the earthly reality. The light of the sun and the moon were considered manifestations of Jesus Christ's illumination.²⁴ As such Manichaeans revered the light of celestial bodies (*Conf.* III.6.9), perceptible to the physical senses, believing it was divine. They also believed that

20 *Conf.* III.6.10, III.7.12, V.10.18–20, VII.1.1, VII.5.7. See van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 42–56 on Augustine's conception of God at the time he was a Manichaean.

21 *Conf.* III.7.12, IV.7.12, VI.3–4, 4–5, VII.1.1; Augustine's visualization of God in a human form,—such as God the Father meandering in the Garden of Eden as depicted in Genesis,—would likely pertain more to the version he learned in the North African Christianity of his youth. Manichaeans ridiculed Catholics for their anthropomorphic conception of God (*Gen. adu. Man.* 17.27). When Augustine later heard Ambrose's sermons in Milan, he was surprised to discover that this was not the way all Catholics viewed God (*Conf.* VI.3.4). Augustine interpreted the depiction of God the Father in the Garden of Eden figuratively in *Trin.* II.10.17.

22 Van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 45–46. Van Geest points out that Augustine's material conception of the divine could have been stimulated by his reading of Stoic authors such as Pliny and Cicero in the last years of his Manichaean membership. Their argument for the materiality of God rested upon the thesis that 'without material there could be nothing'. God was spiritual only in so far that spirit was conceived as a kind of 'matter'. Consequently, God must be considered as immanent in the world. These ideas would have also contributed to Augustine's rejection of the dualistic Manichaean conception of God.

23 Augustine's assessment here is contested by a number of researchers. F. Decret interprets the Manichaean Kingdom of Light as immaterial and good; the Darkness as pure evil and matter. [*L'Afrique manichéenne (Ive–ve siècles) Étude historique et doctrinale* (Paris, 1978) e.g., I.132]. Drecoll-Kudella and van Oort accept Augustine's appraisal and interpret Manichaeism in the 'materialist' way in which Augustine pictures it: (Drecoll-Kudella, *Augustin*, 34–36); van Oort: *Mani, Manichaeism and Augustine, The Rediscovery of Manichaeism & its Influence on Western Christianity* (Tbilisi, 2001) 37–53.

24 See also *Contra sec.* and *Contra epistulam manichaei quam vocant fundamenti* 15–23; *De vera religione* 39.73, *Ep.* 55.4.6.

God's light was encapsulated in plants, which was liberated when consumed and digested (III.10.18). He also saw in Manichaeism not only a dualistic view of God but also the origin of evil in the divine sphere; both conceptions he later rejected adamantly. He argued that the force of darkness in the Manichean account of world history had to be necessarily considered divine and eternal in order to be powerful enough to cause degradation in the divine Realm of Light. He then challenged the Manichaean attribution of immutability to the God of Light. If this were so, he argued, then a war would not have been necessary to fend off an attack from evil forces (VII.2.3). He discovered the solution to his objections in Plotinian metaphysics and theology. There, the Godhead (the three Hypostases) is of a completely immaterial nature. The highest principle of this Godhead, 'the One' or 'the Good', was the source of all existing things. Consequently all things were inherently good and only in the absence of this divine good, could evil exist. Thus there was no dualism in Plotinus' position on good and evil.

Another issue for him was the Manichaean view of Jesus Christ as a radiating, non-physical being of light. Augustine came to see this claim as completely undermining the theological significance of Christ's physical human life on earth as relayed in the New Testament (*Conf.* V.10.20).²⁵ The Manichaean view missed the understanding of the lessons of Christ's humility from having taken on a fully human existence and suffering from earthly injustice. Additionally it missed the significance of Christ taking sins away from the world and forgiving the wrongdoings of individuals (*Conf.* IV.3.4 and V.10.18). Another point of Augustine's critique was that the Manichaean Christ was merely a secondary God amidst a pantheon of various other deities and not the central redemptory figure. Augustine will express a similar kind of critique towards Platonists who did not recognize Christ at all. Augustine gradually perceived the Manichaean Godhead as powerless and hollow. He tells us that the awareness of the Manichean 'highest God' as well as their conception of Christ hardly changed his outlook on life, which was still driven by worldly ambitions, obtaining professional status and sexual gratification. Manichaean wisdom turned out to be far from the Ciceronian ideal of immortal and otherworldly wisdom which he still longed for underneath it all. He did come closer to this wisdom in Plotinus' philosophy, albeit partially, in the transcendent Wisdom and Light of the second Hypostasis, the divine Intellect. Manichaeans lacked a conception of Christ as Word of God (*Conf.* IV.11.16–17).

25 For a refutation of Augustine's perspective: van Vliet, *Adoptionism*, Kap. IV.A.

Plotinus, on the other hand, employed a convincing notion of an eternal 'Son of God' in reference to the Hypostasis Intellect or to the Λόγος. This is an important point which will receive more attention in this chapter, as well as Chapters 3, 5 and 6. Another major bone of contention of Augustine against the Manicheans was their conception of the soul as a material entity to the wholesale exclusion of an incorporeal and spiritual reality.²⁶ They considered thinking a material activity (*Contra sec.* 20.12) and as such, truth was contemplated only with the physical senses (*De vera religione* 30). Their conception of the soul as divine—as light consubstantial with the Godhead and therefore resembling the Godhead—was also of a material nature (*Conf.* III.6–10). Plotinus' philosophy provided Augustine with a more plausible doctrine of the human soul, especially in which the highest region, the rational soul, was completely incorporeal. Human thought went far beyond the perception of the physical senses (for otherwise one could not contemplate the divine, which was wholly immaterial). The crux of the matter here, Augustine confessed, is that he himself during these years (between the age of 19 and 28) could not imagine reality extending any further than that which was perceptible to the senses (III.7.12). He witnessed the Manichaeans doing the same.

Augustine came to regard the Manichaean conception of *malum* as a substantial and causal principle, as dangerous. Evil conceived as a force exterior to human will, had the direct effect of indifference to an individual's part in immorality. It implanted blindness to the truth of human nature: of the weak will which is inherently proud and egotistic; that evil exists in oneself and not outside oneself as a separate invading force (such as in *Conf.* III.8.16–17). This conception too was corrected by Plotinus' conception of the Good as the highest principle. Augustine's later conception of evil, as influenced by Plotinus' philosophy, became an integral element of his doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*.

Augustine accused Manichaeans of arrogance in a number of different ways. He saw that their conception of self-redemption by doing only good works would keep them trapped in self-deceit and illusions which would ultimately deter them from ever becoming divine. In short, their lack of humility was a direct result of an incorrect understanding of God and particularly of Christ (*Conf.* v.3.3 and v.3.4). Christ was indeed designated as one of the redeemers in Manichaeism. Yet the crux of the matter, in Augustine's eyes, was that they

26 G. Quispel, an internationally recognized researcher of Gnosticism and Manichaeism, would contest Augustine's perspective of Manichaeism as being materialistic (e.g., *Das ewige Ebenbild*).

ignored one's dependence on Christ's grace for redemption.²⁷ Instead of glorifying Christ, they glorified themselves (*Conf.* IV.1.1) and their own alleged divinity (V.3.5, V.10.18).²⁸ One requires Christ to heal the debility of the human will and its inappropriate desires, a feat which is not possible to accomplish alone. This last point of critique is also relevant to his critique of Platonists. They too displayed arrogance and this was according to Augustine due to their lack of recognition of important lessons of Christ's human life, which they rejected.

In spite of Mani's pretension that his revelation brought forth a 'rational world religion' with an intellectual appeal, Augustine became disillusioned with the many inconsistencies of these teachings. He relayed an important event which became the straw that broke the camel's back: he began to ponder the Manichaean vision of the supra-lunary world involved in combat between light and darkness and its discrepancies with the mathematical calculations by astronomers which explained and even predicted the movements of the stars and the influence of the moon (for example, the flow of tides, eclipses).²⁹ He longed to have a serious discussion with an authority on the subject. His chance came in the summer of 382 when the Manichaean bishop Faustus of Mileve, a reputed exegete renowned for his eloquence, arrived to Carthage (*Conf.* V.6.10). Faustus' inability to resolve the discrepancies was a bitter disappointment.

Simultaneously it dawned on him that many Manichaeans, like himself, believed that if an idea was packaged in erudite language then it was considered more credible than concepts expressed in simple language (referring to his original criticism of the bible in *Conf.* V.6.10). Subsequently, he discovered that many more of Mani's revealed tenets, when reflected upon, had little theological credibility.³⁰ The point here which Augustine was apparently underlining

27 It remains unclear in this exposition what the Manichaean Christ's role was in battling the evil forces, referring to the biblical verses of him 'taking away the sins of the world' or 'dying on the cross for our sins': whether Manichaeans attached literal meaning to these biblical passages and whether this was evident in their cosmology.

28 Their founder as well as their bishops believed themselves to be direct manifestations of the Holy Spirit and were as such already assured of their redemption (i.e., the latter had titles such as: 'the Elected' or 'the Perfect').

29 *Conf.* V.3.6, 4.7, 5.8–9, 6.10, and 7.12–13; Augustine criticized astronomers/astrologers and Manichaeans for their admiration and adoration of the creation instead of its Creator (*Conf.* III.6.10).

30 Hoffmann illustrates the tension in Manichaeism between belief in Mani's revelation and the rational. Manichaeism was based on the revelation of Mani yet its history of the world's beginning as well as the explanation of reality was presented in a logical and the most rational comprehensible way. See notes 18–19 Their religion was not a result of discursive reflection and was not developed by conceptual logic. Mani's revelation was seen as a gift from God, which a human was unable to fabricate alone. As such, insight was not

in his autobiography, was the onset of his growing need at that time of his life to understand and intellectually accept what he believed. A belief must be grounded in viable truths which will prove their legitimacy; religious experiences must be couched in a philosophically sound foundation.³¹ He found these conditions fulfilled in Platonist philosophy, such as the use of logical or feasible arguments to convey truths of the divine, as well as the notion of *credo ut intellectum*: the necessity of believing in order to understand (for example: Plotinus: *Enn.* v.5.12.3), in which understanding in the long run will gradually replace belief.

In the upcoming sections of this chapter, we will examine further how his critique of Manichaeism spurred him on to further study, to ultimately embrace certain notions of Platonist philosophy. These particular points of critique will lead to crucial insights as to what Augustine explicitly favored or objected to in Platonism, which eventually re-appear in his doctrine of the *imago Dei*. Yet before this discussion can take place, and before his account of his first reading of Platonist books can be treated, it will be helpful to look further at other events in his life which are not only important to account for in his intellectual development, but are also essential to his later formulation of his doctrine of the image of God. These two influences on Augustine will be treated in utmost brevity here: his encounter with skepticism and then his contact with Bishop Ambrose and Simplicianus at the Catholic basilica in Milan.

1.5 *Augustine's Post-Manichaean Intellectual Development*

As Augustine's discontentment with Manichaean attitudes and notions increased with the years, he began to question whether truth could even be found at all. He moved from Carthage to Rome in 383 to take up his teaching career (*Conf.* v.12.14). While in Rome (and probably in Milan too, in 384), he began studying skepticism for a short period (v.9; v.10.18–20) with which he was already familiar through Cicero's works. His turn to Academicians repre-

required by individual Manichaeans. The human was called back to the Light world (just as the Primal Human in the creation myth: for a more extensive summary of the myth, see Zwollo, 'Manichese Kosmologie', 143–146; on the Primal Human: 143–144). His being was introduced to γνῶσις, the truth and secrets of the world of Light ('Erst Einsehen', 77–85).

31 Hoffmann (*ibidem*, 105–108) points out that Mani's rational *gnosis* which required belief in order to be understood, differed from what Augustine later posited about believing before acquiring insight (LZ: for instance in *Trin.* XIII.1.1–4. See Chapter 5.3). The latter relied upon authority, the Scriptures as Word of God, which communicated these truths. Augustine placed conditions upon belief. One must be able to support truth with some kind of verifiable, outer evidence, i.e., the proof of the authority of the church was supported by an uninterrupted tradition. (See also *De vera religione* 24–54.)

sented his first contact with Platonism.³² Skeptics were of the opinion that all assertions should be doubted because truth cannot possibly be known through the physical senses. Hence his encounter with philosophy reinforced his doubts in Manichaeism which prescribed deriving truth from sense perception (*Conf.* v.14.25), convincing him even more that the Manichaean view of reality was an epistemological dead end. After a year's stay in Rome, he landed a position as professor of Rhetoric at the emperor's residence in Milan (v.18.22) where he remained for approximately four years (ca. 383–387). Upon arriving there, Augustine was still unsettled about the tenets of Manichaean ideology—such as the origin of evil³³ and how God could be both good and evil (v.10.20) conceptions for which he found no satisfying alternative. The bishop of Milan played an important role in his further development. A thorough study of Ambrose's influence on Augustine's doctrine falls unfortunately beyond the scope of this study, thus the treatment here will necessarily be brief.

1.6 *The Influence of Ambrose*

Bishop Ambrose was an influential religious and political figure in Milan. His famed eloquence aroused Augustine's curiosity and soon he was attending mass on Sunday to listen to the bishop's biblical exegeses (*Conf.* v.13.23). To his growing amazement, he began to discern the differences between Manichaeism and Catholicism. The first was Ambrose's non-literal interpretation of the Old Testament. Augustine had been accustomed to the Manichaean's severe literal reading of the Jewish bible which had led them to conclude, among other things, that Catholics held an anthropomorphic—and in their eyes ridiculous—conception of God (vi.3.4).³⁴ Augustine discovered from Ambrose's sermons that this claim was not justified. Subsequently he learned that the Jewish bible contained stories of value and indeed referred to ultimate truths (v.14.25). Mani rejected the Old Testament in its entirety, claiming that it had been falsified because (when read literally) it contained only fragments of the truth. In his teaching, God the Father from the creation story in Genesis pertained to the nefarious forces which created humans and the material

32 These were Platonists of the Athenian Academy, i.e., Carneades and the Middle Academy (see Brown, *Augustine*, 79–80; van Oort, *Jerusalem Babylon*, 56). These philosophers were not in doubt that truth existed, as Augustine put it, but did doubt whether truth could be known. In *Contra academicos* (386), Augustine expressed his criticism of skepticism. Later he came to reject the skeptic standpoint of never being able to arrive at truth and even considered it harmful (*Conf.* vi.1).

33 *Conf.* vii.2.3–5, 2.5–7, 7.11.

34 See note 21 where this subject is also treated. See also *Gen. adu. Man.* 17.27.

world.³⁵ Augustine came to the conclusion that these Manichaeian claims were intended to mislead seekers of truth and keep them as far as away as possible from finding it.

Yet Augustine was not entirely convinced that Catholicism was the way for him. He decided to become a catechumen in the Catholic church in Milan at least 'until some clear light should come by which I could direct my course.' (*Conf.* v.14.25). Augustine also became acquainted with the bishop's former instructor, Simplicianus (viii.1.1). These two church men, whom Augustine came to admire greatly, aided him in his refutation of Manichaeism by deepening his understanding of Christianity and by inculcating in him a new appreciation of the bible. In Ambrose's sermons he also heard for the first time that mankind had been created according to God's image in a non-physical, spiritual sense (*Conf.* vi.3.4). He admitted that at that time he could not comprehend how such an image of God could exist (vi.4.5),³⁶ because prior to his stay in Milan his own conception of God had been materialistic. Ambrose's sermons or exegetical works could have been what initially brought Augustine to the path of understanding the immateriality of God and of other conceptions such as the origin of evil or his initial interpretation of Gen. 1:26–27, the *imago Dei*.³⁷

35 Another objection of Mani to the Old Testament was that it contained scandalous stories of the patriarchs and their immoral behavior (e.g., polygamy).

36 'I also learned that your sons, whom you have regenerated through grace through their mother, the Catholic Church, understood the text concerning man being made by you in your image, not to mean that they believed and thought you to be bounded by the form of a human body. Although I had not the least notion or even an obscure suspicion how there could be spiritual substance ... I was glad, if also ashamed, to discover that I had been barking for years not against the Catholic faith but against mental figments of physical images (*phantasmata*).'*Conf.* vi.4.5. (See Augustine's notion of *phantasma* in Chapter 4.2. In this context, 'physical fantasy images' refer to the mythical conceptions of gods which played a role in the Manichaeian cosmic myth.) 'I didn't know that God is spirit and not a being with limbs in length and width ... as a spirit is the same as God ... also that which is in us by which we have a resemblance ...' (vi.3.4).

37 See G.A. McCool, 'The Ambrosian Origin of St. Augustine's Theology of the Image of God in Man', *Theological Studies* 20 (1959) 62–81. McCool (and other researchers) assume Augustine's dependency on Ambrose for his doctrine of the *imago Dei* (See Ambrose, *Hexameron*). (See also *De beata vita* 1.4: Augustine's reference to Ambrose and Plotinus.) A general consensus exists concerning influence of Plotinus in the works of Ambrose, evidenced by his quoting of numerous passages from the *Enneads* without ever mentioning Plotinus, Platonism or Greek philosophy (such as in *De Isaac* and *De bono mortis*, two sermons preached in 386. See McCool, *ibidem*, 64). This discovery was made by P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin* (Paris, 1950, 1968) 93–138. Prior to this discovery, researchers believed that Ambrose had little interest in philosophy on account of his expressed anti-philosophical attitude.

However, the notions of immateriality of God, of evil as the absence of good, as well as a doctrine of imaging God are strongly present in Plotinus' *Enneads* as well, as we shall see below.

1.7 *Augustine's Appraisal of Platonism*

Augustine recalls another important event in his life during his stay in Milan (VII.9.13): 'Through a man puffed up with monstrous pride, you brought under my eye some books of the Platonists translated from Greek into Latin.'³⁸ In books VII–VIII of *Conf.*, he describes the content of the *libri platoniorum* which directly inspired fiery enthusiasm. These books were presumably treatises of the *Enneads* or works of Plotinus' disciple, Porphyry.³⁹ The following discussion will deal with Augustine's reports in *Conf.* on how he experienced Platonism at that time of his life. This will include how these Platonist notions liberated him from Manichaean falsities and ultimately brought him closer to Catholicism.⁴⁰

1.8 *The Platonist 'Son of God'*

In the famous passages of *Conf.* VII.9.13–15, Augustine claims that certain notions of truth which he read in the Platonist books were the same as those in the Gospel of John (1:1–5).⁴¹ He described the similarities which he discovered between the two: that the Word of God was born from God and that it is the source of all things; that the Word is the Light of the World which mankind did not accept and that the Word is the only begotten Son of God the Father

38 It is not clear in *Conf.* whether Augustine actually had contact with Platonists of his day. The only mention of a contact was the 'puffed up person' who handed him the Latin translations. It appears that Augustine's real involvement with Platonism was through reading their literature.

Was there a circle of Milanese Christian Platonists with whom Augustine would have come into contact? This was a theory proposed originally by P. Courcelle, *Recherches*, 136–138 and 251–255. I concede with J.J. McEvoy, that there is not enough evidence to suppose a Platonist movement within the church of Milan ('Neo-Platonism and Christianity', 164, 169). See also F. van Fleteren, 'Ascent to God', 64.

39 See Chapter 1.4.3 for the *status quaestionis* on this issue: 'Plotinus' Influence in Augustine from General to Specific'.

40 For an overview of Augustine's comments on Platonism in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei*, the Plotinian influences in *Trin.* as well as current questions debated in Augustinian scholarship, see Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin*, 13–43.

41 In Augustine's discussion of Plato and the Platonists in *Civ. Dei* x.2, he mentioned again these correspondences with the Gospel of John and then cited Plotinus' name. He also mentioned that Porphyry's second divine entity was designated as the Son of God (*Civ. Dei* x.23. This is discussed in section 2 of this chapter).

who is unchangeable and eternal. He also read in the Platonist books that, just as in John, souls receive the fullness of God and become blessed and wise by participating in his Wisdom.⁴²

Augustine's reading of the *libri platoniorum* was accompanied by euphoria. A note of interest to interject here is that Augustine had told Simplicianus about his reading of the Platonist books, who in turn, congratulated him for not falling for the misleading cosmologies of other philosophers. Simplicianus told him that in the works of the Platonists, God and the Word of God were expounded in various ways (*Conf.* VIII.2.3). Yet shortly afterwards, Augustine's enthusiasm for these books cooled. Because in the same books he discovered a number of unacceptable notions and especially that something crucial was missing.

For Platonists, who posited the absolute immateriality of God, the incarnation of a divinity into human physical body was unthinkable. For this reason, the New Testament notion of Jesus Christ was undeserving of their attention.⁴³ The Platonist 'Son of God' did not incarnate into a physical body or lead a human life, nor would he have humbly died for the sake of the sins of humanity. Lacking a Christology (which would include the Incarnation of the Son of God), Augustine deemed the Plotinian Godhead deficient. There was no personal deity to whom one can pray or confess; nor a deity who answers or forgives sins, instilling in humans the awareness of a humble and tender heart, while promising resurrection after death (*Conf.* VII.21.24). Christ is in this sense radically different than Plotinus' wholly immaterial and transcendent second hypostasis Intellect (which was likely what Augustine was referring to in *Conf.* VII.9.13 as the Platonist 'Son of God', see also section 2 in this chapter). Christ is for Augustine a divine entity who interacts with humans on a personal level and grants salvation. Although Augustine objected to the absence of Jesus Christ in Plotinus' philosophy, he found the Neo-Platonist immaterial conception of God which is the highest Good, Truth, Light and Wisdom highly acceptable.

42 Augustine's descriptions here further raise the question as to which Platonist books Augustine must have read in Milan. Many researchers assert that he is referring to Plotinus' divine Intellect (Νοῦς-designated as Light and Wisdom) as this so-called 'Son of God' (e.g., Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin*, 83–88, etc.). In my view, Augustine saw the Platonist 'Word or Son of God' as a combination of Plotinus' Intellect as well as his divine Λόγος, the latter of which was transcendent as well as immanent. The divine intermediary between humans and the transcendent One in Plotinus' philosophy was namely the Λόγος and not the Intellect (Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος', 252–261).

43 See Porphyry's 'Against the Christians' which Augustine refuted in *Civ. Dei*. See also Fattal's overview on Porphyry (*Plotin chez Augustin*, 43–47, 88–96).

Additionally, he found in Plotinus' philosophy a more positive outlook of the material world, a cosmology illustrating a harmonious relationship between the divine and physical realms (which was more in line with the biblical perspective.) This will be delineated further below.

1.9 *The Plotinian Immaterial Divine and the Absolute Good*

Augustine tells us that his Manichaean perspective of evil was thrown overboard when he became acquainted with the notion of the absence of good *privatio boni*.⁴⁴ He discovered this notion, as well as that of evil as non-being, in *Enn.* (v.9.10.18–20) which was explicated in the following way: Plotinus' Godhead consists of three Hypostases: the first of which is the One or Good; the second and third, the Intellect and Soul. The two lower divinities derive solely from the One, the Good, and like the One, are completely immaterial, transcendent and good. The One is the highest Good and the monistic principle of all existence. It follows that all things in the world are inherently good as well. In effect, evil can only exist at the extreme limit of the spectrum of good, in matter.

Plotinus' conception of the immaterial divine was essential as well to Augustine's theological development. In light of his critique of the Manichaean Godhead, the Ruler of Light and Good, as being of a material nature, he found the prescribed redemption of Mani useless because it impelled the faithful to search for God's light in all the wrong places: in the light of the sun, the moon and even in plants. The ambition of returning all light in matter to its origin caused obsessions with material things, such as the consumption of plants in order to release God's light and to return it to its proper realm. Like he himself, when he first joined their church, Manichaeans believed that the physical senses were able to perceive divine and ultimate truth. This view implied that nothing else existed outside of physical reality and that there were no transcendent truths.⁴⁵

Hence, Augustine's acceptance of the Plotinian doctrine of the immaterial divine and the soul represents an important turning point in his intellectual development.⁴⁶ it facilitated his refutation of not just Manichaean but all

44 *Conf.* III.7.12, VII.12.18.

45 Manichaeism did not include a theory of Ideas or Forms as causal principles of all living things, as the cosmologies of Plotinus and Augustine did. At the close of his refutation of materialism in *Civ. Dei* VIII.5, Augustine discretely referred to his critique of Manichaeism as those who adhere to a material conception of God as well as to the notion of consubstantiality of the human soul and the divine.

46 Why was the notion of an immaterial Godhead of such importance to Augustine? Wet-

doctrines of materialism.⁴⁷ Augustine extended the Neo-Platonist notion of immateriality and metaphysics to his own doctrine of creation (based upon Genesis), and most importantly, to his interpretation of Genesis 1:26, his delineation of the human image of God. Augustine embraced as well Plotinus' designations of the divine as completely immutable, eternal, transcendent and good. The divine can never degrade or become damaged (as in the case of the Manichaean Godhead: the Realm of Light by the dark forces). Augustine will fashion his own theology in a similar way—the divine as transcendent, stable and true in contrast to the material creation, which is subjected to change, degeneration, corruption and death. The expounding of a completely immaterial Godhead also holds consequences for the philosophical conception of physicality and matter.

For Plotinus, the material world, as furthest from the realm of the One and the Good and designated as the only dimension where the existence of evil was possible, does not consist of substantial true being. (for example, *Enn.* 1.8.) The Hypostases, on the other hand, do. Divine entities are related to the material world and humans through a certain participation of being and this participation consists of the human soul consciously imitating a higher principle. Thus the relationship of humans and all things in the world to the Hypostases (their origin and cause) was dominated by a hierarchy and natural harmony. The Plotinian notion of universal harmony was indisputably attractive to Augustine,

zel on the Platonist immaterial God in *Conf.* VII: 'But even granting his experience some authority, it isn't immediately clear why his soul's immateriality should now be so much evident to him or what immateriality in the context is supposed to mean.' [J. Wetzel, 'Will and Interiority in Augustine: Travels in an Unlikely Place', *Augustinian Studies*, 33, 2, (2002) 139–160]. Wetzel, evidently unable to provide a sufficient explanation for why the immateriality of God is important to Augustine, attempts to relate it to Augustine's doctrine of the human will and its mystery. My study on Augustine's *imago Dei* will however provide a clear justification by Augustine himself why the notion of the immateriality of God and the soul were of immense importance. Perhaps this may be not so evident in his ideas about will, as Wetzel claims, but it is indeed evident in his doctrine of creation, his ontology and in his depiction of the relationship between the Creator and creatures. See Chapter 4.2.

- 47 R. Holte explains Augustine's perception of the history of philosophy in the centuries after Plato as engaged in an incessant struggle against materialism. The bishop regarded the ontological materialism of the Stoics as a manifestation of the universal blindness of humanity which was a consequence of its exclusive perception of the sensible. According to Augustine, the skeptical views of Arcesilaus and Carneades were to be considered at least of some service by having signaled the fragility of the Stoic criteria of truth founded upon sense knowledge—even if they, too, could not attest to a spiritual intelligible world (*Contra acad.* 111.11.26, 12.27, 17.38–18.40). [*Béatitude et sagesse, Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne* (Paris, 1962) 98–99.]

as evident in his mature doctrine of creation and the *imago Dei* where the relationship between the Creator and his creatures is articulated in a similar way—for example, in terms of participation. (Not surprisingly, these aspects are mentioned in *Civ. Dei*—in the upcoming section—as positive attributes of Platonism.) This harmony was absent in Manichaean cosmology.⁴⁸ Additionally we can add that Augustine followed Plotinus by positing that the material world was ultimately good and beautiful. This stands in stark contrast to Mani's view, that the material world was created by evil forces and was good only insofar as physical things contained a divine spark.

Plotinus' conception of reality was based upon eternal, causal Form principles existing in the divine world on which all things in our world were dependent.⁴⁹ Truth derives only from God and God is immaterial, therefore ultimate truth can only be of an immaterial nature as well. Truth cannot be obtained through the physical senses; it is only obtained with the mind's eye. Human knowledge is thus dependent upon the divine intelligible world (the divine Intellect). These are likewise essential principles in Augustine's epistemology in his doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*. Augustine borrowed these from Plotinus, as well as the confirmation that the truth did indeed exist and could be obtained (unlike Academic skepticism). Augustine also learned from Plotinus that God exists in the human soul in the form of divine Light. This sounds Manichaean—yet in Plotinus philosophy all of these (the soul, knowledge and God's light) are of an immaterial nature. It is evident in Augustine's major works (such as *Conf.*, *Civ. Dei*, *Gen. litt.*, and *Trin.*) that he studied these con-

48 A.H. Armstrong observes that Augustine likely found Manichaean cosmology depressing because of its view that the world and matter were essentially of an evil nature and were not destined to survive. The negative view of the world could have been alleviated, says Armstrong, by Augustine's apprehension of the correct reading of Genesis, the subsequent appreciation of the Old Testament which he learned in Milan (i.e., the affirmation that the creation is good, e.g., *Conf.* VII.13.19; his praise of the beauty of God's creation). His positive estimation of the visible world could have been inspired as well as by readings of Plotinus' *Enneads* (e.g., *Enn.* I.6. and III.2.13, 17–33), treatises in which the beauty of the world was praised. ['Gnosis and Greek Philosophy', in: B. Aland (ed.) *Gnosis, Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen, 1978) 87–124, 113]; Fattal points out that Porphyry's urging to flee the body in order to ascend to the higher principles (mentioned by Augustine in *Civ. Dei* x.24, 29; XXII.26), would neither have been inspiring to Augustine (*Plotin chez Augustin*, 25–26, note 38). In these passages, Augustine defended Christ's Incarnation in a body as a token of his humility. He also attested to the beauty of creation, the human body, gifts of God, and signs of His goodness (*Civ. Dei* XXII.24) in a way similar to Plotinus.

49 See note 45 on Manichaeism lacking a conception of the intelligible world. See also *Civ. Dei* VIII.6, Augustine's account of the Platonist notion of the intelligible world, discussed in section 2 of this chapter.

cepts directly from treatises from Plotinus' *Enneads*. The Plotinian influence in Augustine's doctrines goes much further than what he would have read in Ambrose's exegetical works.

Augustine rejected Platonism for its absence of Christ as divine Love and ultimate Wisdom. Yet ironically, other aspects of Plotinus' Godhead, such as the characteristics of the second Hypostasis, the divine Intellect (the 'Son of God') were of influence on Augustine's development of his Christology as the *Verbum Dei* as well. (See Chapter 6.2.) For Augustine, Manichaeism might have at least engaged a certain Christology, yet its view of Christ did not provide a sufficient explanation of salvation in the personal life of the faithful. Their Christology was devoid of accompanying notions such as humility, grace and the necessity of the healing of one's will. Platonism was missing these notions as well, he claimed, which substantiated his persistent reproach of their arrogance, as we will see in the next subsections. Augustine criticized Plotinian divine entities further that they were not very personal and of an abstract nature. In addition, they were not worshipped nor did he perceive them as directly instrumental in redemption. The Platonists do not honor their gods or bring them thanks (*Conf.* VII.9.14; VIII.1.2). Like Manichaeism, Platonic philosophy was also objectionably polytheistic (VII.9.15, VIII.1.2).⁵⁰ Augustine had attacked the Manichaean claim that their religion was 'rational'. Plotinus' view of the Godhead on the other hand was substantiated by reasoning and argument which had logical, plausible consequences. We can also infer that Augustine obviously perceived that Plotinian theology stimulated intellectual and spiritual growth, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

1.10 *The Inward Turn and the Ascent (1)*

Another aspect of Plotinian philosophy which made a decisive impact on Augustine was the inward turn to experience God and contemplate eternal

50 In this passage Augustine added that they revered statues of idols and anthropomorphic gods. Was he referring here to the Platonist philosophers who revered the Greek pantheon? Or was he referring to Porphyry whose understanding of myths was essentially historical? [R.J. Hoffmann, *Porphyry Against Christians, The Literary Remains* (Oxford, 1994) 161]. This critique would not readily apply to Plotinus or Plato. Plotinus showed little interest for the Greek pantheon. When the gods were mentioned in the *Enneads*, they were intended to be understood in an allegorical manner. Nor did Plotinus revere the planets. He did call on the gods for help to resolve a philosophical problem (i.e., *Enn.* III.7.11.8; see note 76). Plato criticized the Greek mythology for its anthropomorphism and for its depictions of the gods in displays of ordinary human behavior and unvirtuous acts, especially as they were impersonated in theatrical productions. Augustine relays this critique (in agreement with Plato) in *Civ. Dei.* II.14, VIII.13.

light: 'By the Platonic books I was admonished to return into myself ...'.⁵¹ In these passages he depicted an experience of perceiving in himself an unchanging light of the Creator which is not perceptible by the senses; a light higher than his own spirit. He perceived the difference between himself and that Light: it was that Light to which he owed his existence, the source of Being, the Son and Word of God.⁵² During these moments he became conscious of God as an unlimited, unchangeable and immaterial Being, completely unlike himself (XIII.9.10). Further he recalled that his ascent to God's illumination had been a step-by-step process (VII.17.23), starting from the physical senses, rising to the faculty of reason, where the images, memories from physical experience were judged. Further he wrote: 'It (LZ: my thinking) withdrew itself from the contradictory swarms of imaginative fantasies, so as to discover the light by which it was flooded.' (VII.17.23).⁵³ In a flash of trembling contemplation, he understood God's invisibility: that He could not be perceived with material images (*phantasmata*). His illustration of his personal ascent to God is in many ways identical to those of Plotinus.

As an expression of his critique, Augustine added a certain variation to the Plotinian step-by-step ascent. He relayed that he became immediately aware of the inability to remain in the blessed light. 'But I was not so stable in the enjoyment of my God. I was caught up to you by your beauty and quickly torn away from you by my weight. With a groan I crashed into inferior things.' (VII.16.22). Through these divine contacts he had indeed learned something about the nature of God, but also something about himself and human nature in general. First of all, that it was almost impossible to keep one's concentration fixed on God for any longer than a mere glimpse. Secondly, he saw himself, in contrast to this perfect Light, as a soul with a weak will filled with darkness and sin (VII.20.26).⁵⁴ Thirdly, he realized that it was through the embrace of Christ and his grace that he was at least able to enjoy God's presence (VII.17.23–24). Only

51 *Conf.* VII.10.16–12.18. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes from *Conf.* in this chapter are translations of Chadwick.

52 *Conf.* III.6.10, VII.14.21, VII.9.13.

53 See *Enneads* V.5.7.17–end for an example of Plotinus' description of the ascent in terms of light.

54 Augustine devoted much attention to the broken character of the human will in *Conf.* (as well as in other works). In *Conf.*, he described the weaknesses of the human will as being overridden by physical desires, for example, in the context of his conversion and his later decision to become celibate (*Conf.* VII.14.20; VIII.5.10–12; 8.19–20; 9.21–24). Augustine's enumerations of the deficiencies of the will were directly involved with arrogance and self-aggrandizement which he elaborated further in *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.* in the framework of his anthropology of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*.

Christ could heal the human will (VII.9.13) which enabled the self to focus on the divine. Furthermore, it was only by imitating Christ's humility (his descent into the world in a physical body) that an ascent to God was possible. Augustine remarked here that there was nothing in the Platonist books which expressed Christ's love or of his grace upon which we are dependent for this glimpse of the divine.⁵⁵ Augustine praised the Platonists for knowing where the blessed Fatherland⁵⁶ was, yet admonished them for not knowing how to get there (*Conf.* VII.20.26). Augustine wrote that Platonists considered it beneath their dignity to acquaint themselves with the humble heart of Christ. These were things which were concealed from wise men and men of reason and were only revealed to the smaller folk. Hence, Augustine's main point of reproach of the Platonists was their haughtiness which impelled them to ignore these important factors. These were his thoughts which he wrote while reflecting upon St. Paul's epistles (VII.21.27). We will return to Augustine's critique of the Plotinian ascent and their alleged lack of consideration for the weakness of the human soul in the upcoming subsections. But first we will continue with Augustine's biography which will enable us to treat other essential factors related to his relationship to Plotinian philosophy.

1.11 *Augustine's Conversion and the Verbum Dei*

When Augustine arrived in Milan, he felt restless and insecure of what he considered ultimate truth, he was unable to refute the tenets of Mani's religion, sensing they were wrong. Two important events in his life were precursors to a profound 'conversion'⁵⁷ to the Catholicism of his youth: his new under-

55 'Where was the charity which builds on the foundation of humility which is Jesus Christ? When would the Platonist books have taught me that?' (*Conf.* VII.20.26). 'None of this is in the Platonist books. Those pages do not contain the face of this devotion, tears of confession, your sacrifice, a troubled spirit, a contrite and humble spirit, the salvation of your people, the espoused city, the guarantee of your Holy Spirit, the cup of our redemption ... No one there (LZ: in these books) hears him who calls "Come to me, you who labor." They disdain to learn from him, for "He is meek and humble of heart" ... It is one thing from a wooded summit to catch a glimpse of the homeland of peace and not to find the way to it, but vainly to attempt the journey along an impractical route surrounded by the ambushes and assaults' (*Conf.* VII.21.27).

56 Augustine uses the term 'Fatherland' in many works. In *Civ. Dei* IX.10.17, he admitted that this expression was also used by Plotinus. 'The return to the Fatherland' is in fact denoted in i.e., *Enn.* I.6.8.22, one of Plotinus' most famous treatises on beauty. There Plotinus illustrates the journey of the soul to the divine origin of beauty with quotes from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

57 During the twentieth century, discussions arose concerning the exact nature of Augustine's conversion: was it an intellectual conversion to philosophy? These were triggered

standing of God and the soul, encouraged by Plotinus' philosophy, combined with his gradual embracing of the Catholic faith as preached by Ambrose. His conversion represented the high point of his biography, which set off a revolution in his life (*Conf.* VIII.12.28–30). This event, which will not be dealt with in detail here, was triggered by numerous other factors and events, such as a more profound understanding of St. Paul. He came to the realization that Catholicism had much more to offer him than he had assumed and that he wished to become a part of it again.

His conversion represented for him an awakening to truths (VII.14.20) which essentially entailed a conception of Christ in the human Incarnation of the Son or the Word of God, *Verbum Dei*. Christ was the immortal wisdom he had been in search of since his reading of Cicero's *Hortensius*. His new (or renewed) Catholic understanding provided him with the justification of his criticism of Manichaeism, Skepticism and Platonism. All the pieces of the puzzle now fell together. This new view of Christ led him to the belief in the eternal Word of God, as not only the Creator (as in the Λόγος of John 1:1–5), but as the Re-creator and Re-former of human souls (from St. Paul's epistles). He came to comprehend that the eternal Word's embodiment and human life served as an example of how to live and act. In addition, Christ as eternal *Verbum* healed the debilitations of human nature and provided the strength and insight for the return to God. He was also the provider of inner growth and divine knowledge, in short, of the necessary tools to become like Him, an eternal and immortal image of God the Father. Living in the human soul and heart, he gave wisdom and true peace. By Christ's grace, one could transform one's love into divine love: the same love of Christ for mankind and the world. Augustine now realized that he possessed the courage to do what he had been longing to do since he was 19 years of age—to lead a life totally devoted to God.

His conversion took place in 386 when Augustine was approximately 32 years old. Three weeks after this experience, he retired to a countryside estate in Cassiciacum with his mother and friends so that they could devote themselves to the pursuit of wisdom through philosophical study (*Conf.* IX.3.5). It was here where he composed his first treatises which reveal much influence of Greek philosophy, including that of Plotinus. He was baptized a year later by Ambrose (IX.6.14). Then they proceeded to make their way back home to North Africa.

by Prosper Alfarić's assertion in 1898 that Augustine's account actually portrayed a conversion to Neo-Platonism. Fattal's discussion of *conversio* includes a history of this debate (*Plotin chez Augustin*, 15–39).; See also B. Dobell, *Augustine's Intellectual Conversion, The Journey from Platonism to Christianity* (Cambridge, 2009); C. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology, An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford, 2006) 3–5.

1.12 *The Ascent (2)*

On the way home, they stopped in Rome (387–388), where he underwent a profound experience of God's light shared by his mother Monica which is presently known as the 'vision in Ostia' (*Conf.* IX.10.23). This depiction was evidently inspired by the Plotinian turning inward and the step-by-step ascent: the silencing of the physical senses and going beyond one's ordinary consciousness by leaving behind the images of material things in the memory. He described this experience as being touched by God's immaterial truth and wisdom. Attaining immaterial truth, he wrote, is as experiencing a moment of eternity. Augustine relayed again a lengthy account of an ascent to God and eternal Light, while defining and analyzing regions of the human mind (*Conf.* X.8.12 and onwards in X).

1.13 *Augustine's Critique of the Plotinian Ascent*

Plotinus' depiction of the inward turn consisted of an 'intellectual'⁵⁸ contemplation of the immaterial God and the Ideas, subsequently uniting oneself with the divine Intellect, then rising further to the One to experience a kind of ecstasy. Compared to the Manichaean depiction of the return to Light, the Plotinian ascent represented for Augustine an entirely different method of approaching God,⁵⁹ one which was more acceptable in many ways, yet incomplete in others.

Augustine's points of critique of the Platonist ascent as enumerated in the last section included: one's inability to remain in concentration of the blessed light due to the deficiencies of the human will and the necessity of Christ for healing them; the impossibility of ascending to God by one's own efforts, and the necessity of Christ's grace to lift up one's consciousness up to the eternal, immutable light. His account of the ascent to God suggested that Plotinus did not offer an explanation of the soul's inability to remain focused on God. Yet Augustine explained that the soul's attachment to the body was one of the main causes for being weighed down and hindered during divine contemplation. Ironically, this was also a Plotinian notion. Augustine also argued that the inability to limitlessly contemplate God was due to man's general disability to avoid sin (*Conf.* VII.3.5), as illustrated by Adam's disobedience to God. Augus-

58 See Chapter 3.3 for Plotinus' characterization of the intellect. For a discussion of this term in the context of ancient and modern terminology, see Chapter 5.3.7: 'Excursus on Love and Knowledge in Modern and Ancient Terminology'.

59 The Manichaean approach apparently also entailed a certain inwardness in which one discovered God's Light in the soul. Yet in Augustine's view this inwardness did not include the transcendence of matter and therefore he deemed it insufficient for truly knowing God.

tine's understanding of sin was likewise influenced by Plotinus to some degree: sin occurs when one puts oneself above God or turns away from God (*aversio Dei*). Dominated by the reality of material images, one 'forgets one's true origins' (*Conf.* XI.1.1.1). Both are typical Plotinian expressions.

1.14 *Augustine's Points of Critique of Platonism in Confessions: A Synthesis*

In Augustine's mind, Plotinus, like the Manichaeans, failed to expound the full implications of the weaknesses in the soul which hindered one's relationship to God. Manichaeans recognized Christ, albeit deficiently. Plotinian cosmology may have been founded on the correct conception of an immaterial, divine 'Son of God', yet it had no notion of the divine Incarnation. As such, both the Manichaeans and Platonists missed the profundity of Christ's message of humility as relayed through his Incarnation. Missing Christ's message bore serious consequences for Augustine. Lack of humility incurred a feeling of superiority towards others which impaired insight into one's soul, one's flaws, immorality and the necessity of changing one's life. Other defective doctrinal aspects also fostered this blindness: such as, the belief that it was possible to ascend to God or become God and acquire redemption by one's sheer willpower. In turn, this led to the misleading conviction that the soul was of divine origin and to other falsehoods concerning one's relationship to God. Manichaeism did not provide him with the tools to perceive the darkness in his soul. Even after reading Plotinus, Augustine claimed to still be unable to sufficiently explain his soul's interiority.⁶⁰

Many of Augustine's criticisms of Mani apply equally to Plotinus. For Manichaeans Augustine had no praise; they were strictly his opponents. Yet his relationship to Neo-Platonism cannot be designated in this way. Embracing certain notions of the Plotinian Godhead assisted Augustine in turning his life in a positive, new direction and these notions always remained true for him. Plotinus' philosophy not only provided him with sound arguments to expose and falsify the Manichaean doctrine of the two opposing forces,⁶¹ its influence brought about a deeper, less material, as well as a more philosophic quality to his religious experiences which (in spite of his criticism of it) inspired him to articulate the soul's relationship to God. In conjunction with Ambrose's biblical interpretations, the *Enneads* provided Augustine with the stimulus for the progressive search for knowledge and truth, for lifelong intellectual and spiritual self-development. It brought Augustine's search for truth back to the bible,

60 *Conf.* VII.20.26–21.27.

61 *Conf.* VII.14; VIII.10.22.

which he had pompously rejected a decade or so earlier for its primitive language and style. Now Plotinus' philosophy enriched his biblical understanding. The combined influence of Ambrose and Plotinus stimulated him to interpret the bible book Genesis and devise his own view of the image of God. In following Ambrose—whose exegesis likely contained many Platonisms—,⁶² Augustine came to value the Old Testament as God's Word and Truth. He accepted that some biblical passages may not always be immediately comprehensible and that bible study opened the door to acquiring true divine knowledge. His renewed understanding of Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Incarnation of the eternal *Verbum Dei*, which came to fruition in Milan, was a milestone for his doctrinal development of the *imago Dei*. It became the basis of his doctrine of intellect which entailed contemplating Christ as the Perfect Image, whose earthly life served as model in which to follow and imitate. The Catholic notion of Christ as a physical human being, completely divine and equal constituent of the Holy Trinity, combined with Plotinus' epistemology and metaphysics, were for Augustine indispensable for the completion of his doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*.

In *Conf.* VII.9.15, he likened the Platonist books he read to the gold which the Israelites took with them from Egypt, as relayed in the bible book Exodus. Although it may be sheer coincidental, it is nonetheless of interest to note that Plotinus was born in Egypt and had studied in Alexandria. Here Augustine is essentially implying: the truth of God, wherever it is found, can be appropriated by Christians for their own use. In other words, take the Egyptian gold—the acceptable elements of the Platonist books—with you.⁶³

Augustine's comments in *Conf.* present a problem which will be of recurring interest to this study. It concerns Augustine's rejection of the Manichaean notion of the consubstantiality of the human soul and God. Ironically, Augustine did not mention in his critique of Platonism their conception of the divinity of the soul. Plotinus indeed claimed that the human soul (especially the intellect) was of divine origin (for example: *Enn.* V.1.10.10–12).⁶⁴ At the end of the next section, this topic will be reiterated.

62 If we are to regard McCool's conclusions as correct (see note 37), then we can infer that Ambrose's treatises were one of Augustine's first exposures to Neo-Platonism. Before this, Augustine was already likely acquainted with Platonism through the works of Cicero, for example, Cicero's translation of Plato's *Timaeus* (mentioned in *Civ. Dei* XI.1.16. This is now a lost work). Cf., G. O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987) 10, note 26.

63 *Conf.* VII.9.15. See also *Doct. Chr.* where he mentioned Egyptian gold in direct reference to philosophers. Cf., van Fleteren, 'Plato, Platonism', 652.

64 Plotinus' treatise V.1. (*On the Three Primary Hypostases*) is considered by the majority of

2 Augustine on Plato and the Platonists in *The City of God* and *The Trinity*

2.1 Introduction

Augustine began the composition of *Civ. Dei* approximately twelve years after the completion of *Conf.*⁶⁵ He devoted much more space here to the appraisal of Platonism and mentioned individual Platonist philosophers by name.⁶⁶ In *Conf.*, he referred only to 'Platonists' as if they were one large group of thinkers who all subscribed to the same philosophy. (Although it is clear today that he was likely only referring to Plotinus or Porphyry.⁶⁷) In *Civ. Dei*, he gives extensive descriptions of their notions, sometimes pinpointing the differences between Plato, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus and Apuleius. Nonetheless, it will be necessary to determine which points of his appraisal in *Civ. Dei* actually apply to Plotinus. In *Conf.* he asserted that the Platonists were the philosophers whose understanding of God was most correct (*Conf.* VIII.2.3). In *Civ. Dei* VIII.1 and 10, he sharpens his specification to the degree that they are the philosophers who are closest to Christian thinking. Augustine distinguishes in *Civ. Dei* more precisely than in *Conf.* which Platonist conceptions are acceptable to Christians. These distinctions serve to judge which beliefs are compatible with life in the eschatological Kingdom of God in his doctrine of the two cities. As such, he also confronts various aspects of Greek and Roman pagan philosophy, concluding that even Platonist philosophy, in spite of its similarities to Christian ideas, was not in itself sufficient to bring about redemption nor entrance into the eternal heavenly city. The notions he deems as favorable in Platonist philosophy are of great interest here. In this exposition, the elements of Platonism which invoked his critique will be examined first, followed by those which he assessed as deserving of praise.

researchers to be one of the *libri platoniorum* which Augustine had read. Others are, e.g., *Enn.* I.6 (*On Beauty*), v.3. (*On the Knowing Hypostasis*).

65 *Conf.* was written between 397–401. The period of his life in which he composed *Civ. Dei* (between 413/415–418/425) overlapped his writing of *Trin.* (400–427) and as such, overlapped the later period in which he composed the books on the *imago Trinitatis* (416–426–427). See Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches*, 45–80.

66 *Civ. Dei* VIII.1–19; IX.10–23; X.1–2, 9–32; XX.25–28; *Saint Augustine, The City of God Books VIII–XVI*, translation by G.G. Walsh and G. Monahan (Washington DC, 1952); BA 33–37.

67 Plotinus is mentioned in: *Soliloquia* I.4.9; *Ep.* 6.1; *Ep.* 118.33; *Civ. Dei* VIII.12; IX.10, IX.17, X.2, X.14, X.16, and X.23 (2×). Porphyry, in *Civ. Dei: e.g.*, throughout book X; XIX.22.

2.2 *Augustine's Critique of Platonism: Theurgy and Demonology*⁶⁸

The bulk of Augustine's critique in *Civ. Dei* was expressed in the form of an attack on Platonist theurgical practices.⁶⁹ Indeed Augustine devoted a considerable amount of space to these themes, his critique being addressed to Apuleius (125–180),⁷⁰ Porphyry (approx. 234–305),⁷¹ as well as Porphyry's stu-

68 *Civ. Dei* VIII.14, 17 and 22; IX.10 and 17; X.9, 11, 24, 29 and 32; and XIX.22–23.

69 Augustine's critique of theurgy is treated here only briefly. For this reason, I provide here a paraphrased version of the context and overview. He began by positing that there were certain aspects of Platonist philosophy which should be set aside: their political theology and their theology based on myths (LZ: i.e., Greek mythology). Their gods were impure demons who mislead and trap hordes of people into erroneous thinking (*Civ. Dei* VIII.5). Further Augustine tells us that these Platonists claimed that beings with a rational soul could be divided into three categories: gods, demons and humans. These passages were followed by a lengthy critique of Apuleius' view on demons, being non-physical but immortal. Augustine's final thoughts in this book were that perhaps good demons did exist, but no one with common sense would believe that worshipping one of them would lead to a happy life after death (VIII.14). Book X contained angry criticism of theurgical practices, aimed at Porphyry. Augustine also attributed to Porphyry the opinion that some gods were subject to suffering and changeability and could even be harmed—just as people—as a result of their involvement with demons. Augustine found this standpoint absurd (X.9–11).

In Augustine's refutation of Porphyry, he demonstrated extensive knowledge of Porphyry's writings such as *Against the Christians Kata Christianōn* (X.24, 32) (XIX.23?), *The Return of the Soul, De regressu animae* (X.9; X.29 and 32) (It is unclear whether the latter work is the same as *Philosophy of Oracles*: see F. van Fleteren, 'Porphyry', 661–663.), *The Philosophy of the Oracles* (XIX.22–23) and *Letter to Anebon* (X.11). Porphyry's works became extinct in late antiquity. The Council of Ephesus ordered a decree in 431 to burn all of Porphyry's writings. Ironically, thanks to Augustine's extensive description of Porphyry's works in *Civ. Dei* (and other early Christian authors), an impression of the content of these works has been preserved. See Hoffmann's introduction in *Porphyry's Against the Christians*. Augustine described Porphyry's statements on the Hebrew God, God the Father and Christ in *Civ. Dei* XIX.23, mentioning here that Porphyry also expressed praise for certain aspects of the Christian God in his book *The Philosophy of the Oracles*.

70 This North African prose writer, famous for such works as *The Golden Ass* (or *Metamorphosis*) and *Amor and Psyche*, was also known to have studied Platonism. He was also an initiate of several mystery religions.

71 Porphyry was Plotinus' favorite student (and editor of Plotinus' *Enneads*) who indeed expressed critique of these practices (*Civ. Dei* X.9–11 and 21–32; also in i.e., Porphyry's *Letter to Anebon*). Yet he apparently approved of them to a greater extent than Plotinus did. Porphyry's students [such as Iamblichus and Proclus (412–485)] even criticized their mentor for failing to understand the necessity of intermediaries. E. Emilsson clarifies Porphyry's involvement with theurgy: 'It is a characteristic of post-Iamblichean Neoplatonism (330AD onwards) that religion, religious rites and even magic (theurgy) were taken to be an alternative way to the soul's salvation, beside philosophy. Porphyry did not share this view. He did not reject magic outright, but he seems to have restricted its efficacy to the sphere of nature and not to have regarded it as a means to establish contact with

dent, Iamblichus (ca. 245–325). Theurgy entailed the use of 'demons' as intermediaries, who by provoking 'spiritual imagery' of the divine, aided the recipient in purifying the soul in order to intensify his vision of God. Augustine understood 'spiritual' as the realm of the soul which was connected to the visual material world (as in the perception of 'spiritual vision' in *Gen. litt.* XII.7.16).⁷² Demons (spirits) manifested in the invisible, physical realm of existence.⁷³

Theurgy was fallacious, Augustine argued, because ascending to God entailed completely transcending all matter (VIII.17). These intermediaries were thought by the Platonists to be benevolent demons (angels).⁷⁴ In *Conf.*, Augustine emphasized that in order to ascend to God, one could only be dependent upon Christ as intermediary.⁷⁵ Hence he had to admit that these particular Neo-Platonists were at least correct in their insight that an intermediary was necessary to strengthen the changeable and temporal soul so that it may become pure and immortal (*Civ. Dei* IX.17). Yet he strongly advised against calling upon demons for assistance, due to the danger it entailed of the possibility of evoking the response of a nefarious one. Instead one should call upon Christ in whom this uncertainty or danger absolutely did not exist (VIII.17). He admitted that Porphyry expressed his reservations and critique about theurgy (X.9–11 and 21–32), yet Augustine found his positive remarks on these practices nonetheless hypocritical. These practices did not effectuate a true vision of God and therefore, he claimed, did not bring a person to salvation, eternity or to attain immortality (X.9).

the intelligible realm ... His interpretation and concerns with religious matters, however, opened the developments undertaken by Iamblichus and the subsequent tradition of pagan Neoplatonism.' E. Emilsson, 'Porphyry', in: E.N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/porphyry/>. April 2013.

72 In *Gen. litt.* XII.13.27–29, Augustine discussed the difference between good and evil spirits (demons) which included implicit critique of Platonist theurgists. Noteworthy here is that in *Civ. Dei* X.9 and 32, Augustine mentions Porphyry and his tripartite soul: intellectual, spiritual and corporeal. This division is identical to Augustine's division in his theory of three visions in *Gen. litt.* XII. See Chapter 4.4.3.2.

73 *Civ. Dei* IX.10.17; X.27.

74 Armstrong on ancient demonology: 'The use of the name δαίμονες for supernatural beings of inferior rank to the gods goes back to Hesiod (*Works and Days*, 122–126). But it was Plato and still more Xenocrates and the Middle-Platonists taking up and developing his ideas, who defined the characteristics of these intermediate beings and worked out a regular daemonology ...' from Armstrong's note on *Enn.* III.5.6: *Enneads*, III, 186.

75 For an examination of Augustine's relationship to Porphyry's works, his description of his teachings in *Civ. Dei* and how they relate to his comments in *Conf.*, see: E. Te Selle, 'Porphyry and Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 5, 1974, 113–148.

These remarks are directly applicable to Augustine's criticisms of Platonists in *Conf.* for their failing to realize the importance of Christ's Incarnation for redemption and the necessity of his grace in order to intensify one's experience of God (such as in VII.9.13–14). Christ's assistance was necessary to cure the flailing human will which could not remain in concentration of God. Thus they would do better to make use of an intermediary who was an excellent resemblance of God. The only perfect intermediary was Christ, who was divine and had incarnated in the flesh. Christians should not regard demons as being superior to humans on account of their incorporeal souls (*Civ. Dei* VIII.17). Christ was the only Intermediary who promised eternal life (X.22) and could purify and truly free humans (IX.10.17). Augustine also reproached Platonists in *Conf.* for their arrogance. Only in imitating Christ, who descended to the world in the lowly form of a slave, could one return to God. (*Conf.* VII.9.13–14). In the same train of thought, in *Civ. Dei*, he persisted admonishing the theurgists for their pride, reminding them, while debunking their practices, that in becoming closer to God, one must first realize how unlike a human being is to God.

An indispensable point to note here is that Augustine's criticism of the Neo-Platonist practice of theurgy and intermediary demons in *Civ. Dei* did not apply to Plotinus. Plotinus recognized the force of magic yet did not make use of it. He consistently adhered to intellectual contemplation in order to acquire insight and to elevate oneself to the highest divine principle. Nor did Plotinus, unlike his successors, advocate the necessity of intermediaries.⁷⁶ He even disapproved

76 Plotinus discussed magic in *Enn.* IV.4.40–44 in a generally negative light—in the context of sense perception and memory—all of which he deemed illusive. The term he used for magic or enchantment, γοητεία, is the same mentioned by Augustine in *Civ. Dei* X.9 (*goeteia*). Plotinus contrasted contemplation with practical activity in that practical activities were driven by passion towards the lower world of sense images. On the other hand, θεωρία was driven by love for the higher which was above affections and passions. In line 43 of this chapter he mentioned that although demons were non-physical, they were still connected to the irrational (= physical) realm through their perception and memory and therefore were susceptible to passion (in contrast to gods who existed in a state of ἀπάθεια). This falls in line with Augustine's critique in *Civ. Dei* X.9, not only of Porphyry's acceptance of magic but of his attribution of affections and changeability to the lower gods (the planets).

Plotinus' discussion of demons in his treatise *Enn.* III.4 On Matter has little to do with magic or calling up a demon as in theurgy. Plotinus' interpretation of Plato's demonology depicted the association of the human soul with a personalized demon who served as a guide in this life. When the soul was geared to the higher intelligible, it received another demon of better quality for assistance to elevate itself above. Yet for someone who has reached this level, there was, according to Plotinus, no longer a need of a demon in order to become wise. One becomes, as it were, his own demon and god *Enn.* III.4.6. 1–5 (*On our Allotted Guardian Spirit*). (See the story of Plotinus' personal demon who was actually a

of magical practices or calling upon demons. However, Augustine did not mention this or the fact that Plotinus failed to realize the need for an intermediary. This could be implied in his already extensive reproach of Porphyry for rejecting Christ as intermediary (for example in *Civ. Dei* x.24). Yet it was also likely that Augustine knew that Plotinus' cosmology contained an entire system of intermediary forces (λόγοι) which transmitted formative principles from the divine to the material level. (See note 97.) Regardless of this, Augustine's critique of ignoring the Incarnation of Christ and the accompanying teaching of humility would still apply to Plotinus.

As in *Conf.* (vii.9.15, viii.1.2), Augustine regretted Platonists' adherence to polytheism (*Civ. Dei* viii.12); a critique which he also directed to Manichaeism as well as to all Greek philosophers. Other points of Augustine's critique included their rejection of the Christian notion of the transformation of bodies and their subsequent resurrection;⁷⁷ their belief in reincarnation;⁷⁸ and their notion of the eternity of the world.⁷⁹

2.3 *Augustine's Praise of the Platonists*

2.3.1 Plato in *De civitate Dei* viii

Plato was for Augustine the philosopher *par excellence*, to whom God revealed truth in the pre-Christian era within the field of philosophy. Because Plato could not have known Christ, it was clear to Augustine that his philosophy could not have contained complete truth. Plato was characterized as the wise man who followed and imitated God, who knew that by loving God and by participation with this God, one became happy. Augustine underlined here that there was no need to search for these qualities in other philosophers, for none of them were as close to Christians as the Platonists (viii.5). Some of their doctrines could be relatively easily harmonized with Christian teaching (viii.10).

god, in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* 10). Plotinus did call upon the gods for help to resolve a philosophical inquiry (*Enn.* iii.7.11.8; iv.9.4.6; v.1.6.9; v.8.9.13). Yet the questions were ultimately resolved by deep concentration. Cf., L. Brisson's 'Plotin et la magie', in: L. Brisson et al. (eds.) *Porphyre, La vie de Plotin*, 2 (Paris, 1992) 465–475; A.H. Armstrong, 'Was Plotinus a magician?', in: *Plotinus and Christian Studies*, 1979, 73–79.

77 *Civ. Dei* xxii.25; See also Mamerto Alfeche, 'Augustine's discussions with philosophers on the resurrection of the body', *Augustiniana* 45 (1995) 95–140 (On *Civ. Dei* xxii.25; from p. 113 onwards).

78 Although Porphyry supported the theory of reincarnation, Augustine congratulated him for his not sharing Plato's view on the transmigration of souls (*Civ. Dei* x.30).

79 *Civ. Dei* xii.14–21, *Trin.* xiii.9.12. In the midst of debunking this notion in *Civ. Dei*, Augustine also rejects an accompanying view that the world is eternally subject to alternating cycles of terminal world fires and beginning anew. He attributes this notion to Porphyry.

He showed his familiarity with the report (LZ: legend) that Plato had traveled to Egypt where he came into contact with either Greek translations of the Old Testament, or with the help of a translator, received instruction in the Scriptures. Augustine even pointed out the correspondences found between the *Timaeus* of Plato and the creation story in Genesis (VIII.11).⁸⁰ Socrates and all his followers merited praise for being the first to articulate ethical doctrines for the sake of improving and ordering human behavior (VIII.3). Augustine discussed their tripartite philosophy (moral, natural and rational) in a positive light (VIII.4; XI.25). Later he remarked that if philosophers like Porphyry would have simply exchanged their errors for truth, they would have eventually become Christians (XI.27). These statements were in fact an elaboration of Simplicianus' observations in *Conf.* VIII.2.3. Yet they were expressed here more emphatically than his praise for (and alleged polemic against) the Platonists in *Conf.*

2.3.2 Their Correct Understanding of God

In *Conf.*, Augustine commended Platonists for their immaterial conception of God, showing his acceptance of Platonist metaphysics of the divine as eternal and unchangeable. In *Civ. Dei*, Augustine elaborated on this praise, characterizing Plato or Platonists as the philosophers who saw the highest good in virtue and came closest to understanding God and truth (v.20). They understood that sheer knowledge of the one immutable God who created us was not enough to attain blessedness but that this God should also be worshipped. In their search for God, he wrote, they also saw that God surpassed all things, including the rational soul and everything of a changeable nature. He was not only the maker of his world, (Augustine interjected that they even used the terminology of 'heaven and earth'), but He also gave humans their reason-oriented and spiritual soul which was capable of partaking of the immutable and non-physical light of God (VIII.1). Their superiority to all other philosophers was also due to notions such as: without God no one would exist, no doctrine would be taught and no actions would be useful (VIII.5).⁸¹ God organized all things, sustained all life and nourished all beings, including the human mind; God was perfect Being, Life and Understanding,⁸² in which there was no mutability; in God

80 Examples of similarities between *Timaeus* and the Old Testament: what God created was good (Genesis); God as Being as in 'I am Who I am—I am Being' in Exodus 3:14 (*Civ. Dei* VIII.11). These correspondences were also brought to attention by Philo in the first century B.C., whose exegeses of Genesis were a source of inspiration for many early Christian philosophers.

81 Here Augustine displays his familiarity with the Plotinian cosmology and *Enn.* v.1 *On the Three Primary Hypostases* where this concept was expounded.

82 Augustine shows his awareness here of the triads in the Plotinus' divine Intellect Νοῦς:

there was no difference between understanding and blessedness; as such, Life, Understanding and Blessedness in Him were equal.⁸³ It was not only important to realize that God made all things –Augustine reminded while relaying the Platonist notions—but also that no one made this singular and immutable principle. God made everything which is material or possesses life and life itself was more excellent than matter (VIII.6). He also claimed that there was no difference of opinion between Christians and Platonists regarding the enjoyment of full blessedness which the mind will enjoy after this life. The Platonists also differentiated between the Creator and his creatures or creation.⁸⁴

2.3.3 The Platonist Notion of the Immaterial Human Mind

In *Conf.* III.6–10, Augustine criticized Manichaeans for their perspective of the material human soul. In *Civ. Dei*, he explicitly praised Platonists for their conception of the soul as well as the activity of human thinking as immaterial.⁸⁵ The mind could not be physical because it must stand above material images, judge them and determine whether they were beautiful or ugly or that which was superior to them (LZ: the eternal Ideas). Platonists deemed the human mind as the rational soul (VIII.5) and correctly made the distinction between contemplation and sense perception (VIII.7). They also correctly discerned that God was higher than all souls and that the human mind was, therefore, of a changeable nature (VIII.6).⁸⁶ The life of the mind needed no physical nour-

Being, Life and Thinking. See Chapters 3.4.3 for Plotinus' use of this triad for the Νοῦς (*Enn.* v.3.5.44); the triad also applies to the intelligible world of Forms. Porphyry also dealt with these triads in the Νοῦς. See also Chapters 5.2 and 6.2.2 on how Augustine characterized the *Verbum Dei* with this triad.

83 Augustine remarks here are the main theme of a roundtable discussion between participants such as Hadot, Henry, Dodds, Theiler, etc. (prominent Augustinian experts) in 'Être, vie et pensée', in: P. Hadot's *Plotin, Porphyre études neoplatoniciennes* (Paris, 1999). The question addressed here was the source of this triad. Does this go back further than Plotinus, to Philo, Plato or others? (It was also explicitly used by other Neo-Platonists as well.) N.b.: A Platonic text entitled *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* deals with the Trinitarian aspects of the three divine principles and their imaging in the human mind. Hadot attributes this text to Porphyry (yet this position is not widely accepted) thus asserting that this work was of great influence on Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity (and/or Marius Victorinus).

84 *Civ. Dei* VIII.6 and x.2.

85 Augustine discussed the topic of the immateriality of thinking in *Conf.* (e.g., x.10.17).

86 Here Augustine supplemented his criticism of the Platonists with his advice to his readers to cast aside the philosophers (without mentioning any names) who posited that the mind was material. He was likely referring to Stoics and Epicureans, but this was also his reproach of Manichaeism for its material conception of God and the human soul (*Civ. Dei.* VIII.5).

ishment, the mind was capable of perceiving and understanding, Augustine added, in a way similar to angels (VIII.6).

2.3.4 The Platonist Doctrine of the Ideas/Forms (*De civitate Dei* VIII.6)
Here Augustine described the Platonist conception of eternal Ideas which was also a direct extension of his praise for their notion of the immateriality of the divine in *Conf.* For every changeable thing, he wrote, there existed an unchangeable Form. Nothing possessed being unless the Form of it derived from Him who was true Being. The divine Form of something material or physical was always preferable to the material object: eternal Forms were always distinguished from matter, or from those things perceived by the senses, subject to time, space and mutability. The Forms were intelligible and only comprehended while in contemplation. Augustine relayed the Platonist conviction that a material object derived its beauty from its eternal Form, which was superior to the beauty of the object itself. The sharp-reasoning and scholarly Platonists, he wrote, effortlessly drew the conclusion that the primary Form itself was not to be found in material, physical form which was variable.⁸⁷ If the Form were changeable, he asserted, then there would be no difference between the judgment of the one who was more talented and another who was less so, between the person who was more scholarly and the less scholarly, the more practiced than the less practiced. If a Form were changeable, a person would not be able to make progress or improve his earlier judgment. The Platonist philosophers perceived correctly, Augustine concluded, that the mind, as well as its glimpse of the Form, had more or less a form,⁸⁸ and if all Form were to disappear, then humans and everything else would likewise cease to exist. This justified why a higher kind of Being must necessarily exist in the unchangeable principal Form which was incomparable to anything else.

As illustrated in the sections above, the conception of divine immateriality and transcendence was lacking in the Manichaean perspective, as well as a conception of the immaterial human mind. Manichaean cosmology did not speak of transcendent Forms on which material things were dependent, or

87 In Plotinus' system of images, the divine intelligible Form manifested on the material level—not as an εἰκών but as εἰδωλα. Although Plotinus was not absolutely consistent in his use of these terms, he made the differentiation between divine and matter here clear. See Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin*, 83–88. See also Chapter 3.2.

88 Augustine likely meant here that the Ideas existed to some extent in the human mind just as in Plotinus (i.e., *Enn.* I.1.9.13–15). In *Trin.* e.g., VIII.5.8 and 6.9, this idea was also expressed.

posit that the material world participated in these Forms by means of imaging. For this reason as well, Augustine would have considered their religion as failing to stimulate insight or gather substantial knowledge (Ideas) of God. In Plotinus' philosophy, contemplation of the Ideas was essential for ascending to God. Augustine borrowed the theory of Ideas or Forms from Plotinus and incorporated it into his exegesis of Genesis of the creation story as we will see in the upcoming Chapters 4 and 5.

2.3.5 Plato on Virtue, Wisdom and Love of God

Augustine praised Plato's declaration that the highest good was manifest in a virtuous life and that this good could only occur in the life of someone who knew, loved and imitated God. Plato saw that philosophizing was equivalent to loving God who was immaterial. The philosopher loved wisdom and was only happy once he began to enjoy God. Yet someone who enjoyed what he loved, was not always immediately happy, because unhappiness was also caused by one's inappropriate loves. Augustine relayed that Plato saw God as the only true and highest Good and thus further designated the philosopher as someone who loved the Good and strived for a good life (*Civ. Dei* VIII.8). Plato also believed that all gods were good. Therefore, Augustine wrote, he was correct in rejecting the plays of theater poets who represented gods on stage committing crimes: because all gods were good, decent and connected to wise persons by their virtuousness (VIII.13). Here we recall Augustine's criticism of the Manichaean evil divinities in *Conf.*, which he refuted with Platonist arguments, such as those above. Further in this context, Augustine recalled the warnings of St. Paul of misleading philosophers and their false wisdom. Repeating the observation of Simplicianus in *Conf.* VIII.2.3, he concluded that Platonists are nonetheless philosophers to be preferred above all others, as their ideas approached those of Christians.⁸⁹

2.3.6 Plotinus on Divine Light

Augustine complimented Plotinus for being the Platonist who understood Plato more excellently than all other Platonists (*Civ. Dei* IX.10). (In fact almost

89 Augustine added that their works were well-known and that they were more apt to discuss these things with us Christians (*Civ. Dei* VIII.10). Note that Augustine seems to imply here encounters with living Platonists whose names he never mentions. Note too that what Augustine ascribed here to Plato here about loving God and his wisdom, he reproduced almost verbatim in *Trin.* XIV.1.1. Here he mentioned Paul's negative comments on philosophers and the wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 3:19).

all his descriptions of Plato above were equally applicable to Plotinus.⁹⁰) Plotinus was again mentioned by name when Augustine expressed his amazement of the behavior of educated Platonists who judged material things of sense perception to be of less value than the immaterial, but then spoke of the blessed life, associating it with physical contacts (IX.19, 17), referring again to the demonology of Apuleius and/or the theurgy of Porphyry. Augustine pondered 'Have they forgotten the saying of Plotinus?'. Then, paraphrasing passages from the *Enneads*, he wrote: 'We must take flight to that far, far better fatherland where we shall find both a father and all things else. And by what fleet must we take flight? By becoming God.'⁹¹ Augustine explained this further, using expressions from Plotinus' as well as from his own doctrine of the image of God: 'Now, if nearness to God is measured by our likeness, then there is no other distance from God than that of dissimilarity; and the dissimilarity of man's soul to incorporeal, eternal and immutable.'

Augustine then re-asserted that Christians preferred the Platonists above all other philosophers because of their insight in the human soul: that the soul was immortal, reasonable and gifted with understanding; it found happiness by participating in the light of God by whom the world was made. For this reason, Augustine wrote, Platonists considered it impossible to attain the goal of blessed life without the purity of chaste love,⁹² and that the blessed life was dependent upon that sole highest good, the immutable God (x.1). Where we also did not differ in opinion with these philosophers, he asserted, was their claim that heavenly beings⁹³ received their blessedness and light from no other

90 Augustine described Plotinus as 'Plato lived again' *Plato redivivus* in *Contra acad.* III.18.41.

91 Augustine's paraphrasing is a combination of passages from Plotinus' *Enn.* I.6.6; I.6.8 and I.2.3. He quoted Plotinus again in *Trin.* IV.11: 'This is the way we should return to the Fatherland ...' to juxtapose his critique of Platonist magic and false intermediaries, as described above.

92 Plotinus and Porphyry were both celibate (as was bishop Augustine). Porphyry did however marry at the end of his life. Noteworthy is that Augustine demonstrates here his knowledge of the Platonic/Plotinian notion of ἑρως.

93 It was Porphyry who dealt with angels (*Civ. Dei* x.9) yet Augustine claimed this to be a doctrine of Plotinus. Augustine could have been referring to *Enn.* III.4, where Plotinus described souls without physical bodies in the higher world of the divine Intellect. In certain passages in the *Enn.*, Plotinus did mention entities who could have been equivalent to Judeo-Christian angels, although the term ἄγγελος was not used. An example is III.4 where Plotinus described souls without physical bodies in the higher world of the Intellect or Νοῦς. See also *Enn.* III.5.6 where Plotinus described benevolent δαίμονες who desired only the good and the beautiful and were products of the World Soul, yet were distinguished from gods or God (= the divine Intellect). A note of interest here: S.R.L. Clark translated Plotinus' term δαίμων in *Enn.* III.4.3.17–21 into English as 'angel': 'Plotinus: Body and Soul',

source than the Christian God (x.2). He then pointed to Plotinus as expounding a certain pure, immaterial light: a light which he declared as divine and distinguished from humans; a light that illuminated the soul so that they themselves radiate with this clarity. These passages recall Augustine's depiction of his own inward turn and the ascent to God's light in *Conf.* VII.10–12 after having read the Platonist books. His insights pertaining to that experience were that the light of the Creator was different from his own and that God could not be perceived with the senses. Here in *Civ. Dei*, he identified that unnamed Platonist author in *Conf.* as Plotinus. Augustine relayed further that for Plotinus the rational soul belonged to the immortal and blessed beings who resided in heaven. They had no nature above them than God himself who made the world and also made the soul.⁹⁴ Noteworthy here is that in *Gen. litt.*, Augustine will demonstrate the affinity of the highest part of the human soul with the angels (See Chapter 4.3). Additionally, Augustine mentioned the Platonist belief that through participation, one could remain in a state of perfection and blessedness (*Civ. Dei* x.2).

2.3.7 Plotinus on Providence, Beauty and *Visio Dei*

Augustine discussed Plotinus from another positive perspective. His principle Providence, Augustine explained, was conceived from the highest Good (the One) whose beauty was immaterial and ineffable. It extended to earthly things by endowing them with beauty, such as the harmonious beauty found in the animal and plant kingdoms (*Civ. Dei* x.17). Beauty was transmitted by Providence through the unchangeable Forms which existed above the physical senses and possessed this beauty (x.14).⁹⁵ He repeated his compliment to Plotinus as having a more correct insight than other philosophers, due to his understanding of divine Providence. Furthermore, he explains that for Ploti-

in: L.P. Gerson, *Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1999) 282–283. The δαίμων mentioned in the treatise *Enn.* III.5 *On Love* had a relationship to the human intellect, as a sort of guardian spirit (III.4.6.3–4); Augustine mentioned the Platonic World Soul later in *Civ. Dei* x.2 as if he had read *Enn.* III.5 where the World Soul as well as δαίμονες were mentioned (although there is no mention of light in the context of *Enn.* III.5). See also *Enn.* v.6.4 and note 77.

94 *Civ. Dei* x.2; Augustine's remarks about Platonist heavenly beings here resemble those in *Gen. litt.* I and III or *Conf.* XIII regarding the angels of the *caelum caeli*: see Chapter 4.3.2.2; The immortal beings in Plotinus to which Augustine referred here, could also be the gods in the intelligible world (as individual Ideas, see i.e., *Enn.* II.9.7.15–16) or the divine Intellect Νοῦς which is pure Intellect. See also Plotinus' discussion of benevolent demons in *Enn.* III.5.6; II.9.7.15–16.

95 See *Enn.* I.6 in Chapter 3.4.7.

nus, seeing God was similar to seeing great harmony of beauty in nature. This vision of God elicited so much love⁹⁶ that Plotinus did not hesitate to admit that if someone missed this they would be deeply unhappy (x.16).

Augustine himself explicated events in the course of history (such as the recent fall of Rome) through the workings of divine Providence (*Civ. Dei* books I–V). Yet his mentioning of Plotinus' conception of Providence is of significance for us for a number of other reasons. Firstly, Plotinus identified Providence with the divine Λόγος, which transmitted Beauty and Form to material things by means of the λόγοι. Secondly, as we will see in his doctrine of creation, Augustine assimilated Plotinus' doctrine of Λόγος into his own cosmology.⁹⁷ Thirdly, the aspects in Augustine's account here of Plotinus' philosophy—such as longing for and loving God and experiencing God as beauty as pertaining to attaining happiness—echoes Augustine's own account of the ascent to God by enflamed love in e.g., *Conf.* XIII.8.10 and by love and beauty in *Trin.*

2.3.8 On the Son of God in the Triune Godhead: *Confessions* and *The City of God*

In *Civ. Dei*, he reiterated his comments in *Conf.* VII.9.13–14 that the Platonists believed in the same eternal 'Son of God' associated with Light and Wisdom which was comparable to what he had read in the prologue of the Gospel of John (although they did not believe in the human Incarnation of God). In *Conf.*, Augustine did not specify any one Platonist, yet in *Civ. Dei* x.2.3, he pointed to Plotinus as being the philosopher whose teaching contained these correspondences and added that this philosopher likewise recognized the difference between the light of one's own soul and that of God's. Yet in *Civ. Dei* x.23, Augustine recognized that Porphyry's doctrine expounded a 'Son of God' as well. In this context, he discussed the doctrines of three divine principles of both Plotinus and Porphyry and their differences. In Porphyry's view, Augustine relayed, the first two principles were God the Father and God the Son, the latter of which was the Intellect or Thought of the Father (*paternum intellectum vel paternum mentem*). Augustine admitted that he was not sure who the third entity in Porphyry's system was. He recalled that Porphyry did speak of an entity between

96 Plotinus expressed this in *Enn.* VI.7.34.9–37 (esp. 37) in the context of the ascent by means of experiencing beauty and love. See Chapter 3.4.7.

97 See Chapters 3.3, 4.2 and 6.2 on the influence of Plotinus' concept Λόγος on Augustine in his doctrine of creation, see Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος'. Plotinus on divine Providence: *Enn.* III.2 *On Providence* (1) and III.3 *On Providence* (2). Cf., P. Boot, *Plotinus Over Voorzienigheid Enneade* III 2–3 [47–48] Inleiding, commentaar, essays (Dissertation, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, 1984); These passages in *Civ. Dei* on the Platonist notion of beauty and the vision of God could be a reference to *Enn.* III.2.13.

the Father and Son and that these three entities were equal in power. In Plotinus' Godhead, Augustine added, it was Nature-Soul which constituted the lowest of the (divine) thoughts of the Father. (Here Augustine was demonstrating his familiarity of Plotinus' treatise on the three principle hypostases, *Enn.* v.1.) Neither of these thinkers, he correctly pointed out, posited a divinity called the Holy Spirit, which derived from God the Father as well as from God the Son, as Christians saw it. These passages concerning the Platonist triune Godhead and especially his recognition of their notions of God the Father and the Son, were certainly not arbitrary or coincidental, as will be evident in the comparison between the Plotinian and Augustinian Godhead in Chapter 6.2. This last remark about the triune Godhead is an appropriate place to address Augustine's critique of Platonists in his work *Trin.*

2.3.9 Critique of the Platonist theory of Ideas in *De Trinitate* IV

Because *Trin.* is the focal point of Chapter 5, introductory remarks on this work will not be necessary here for establishing the context of Augustine's comments on Platonism. His criticism of Platonists is scattered throughout *Trin.*, often in short but caustic formulations.⁹⁸ Yet they are primarily concentrated in book IV. Augustine's critique in this book differs from his appraisal in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei* in that he did not even use the term 'Platonist' to designate whom he was referring to and only sparingly used the term 'philosopher' for accentuation. For example, while speaking of the arrogance and deceit of the devil, idols and demons,⁹⁹ he mentioned in the same breath puffed-up persons adhering to false philosophy. (He deemed them as 'puffed-up' in *Conf.* VII.9.13 as well.) These were clearly the same arrogant Platonists (Porphyry and others) whom he reprimanded in *Civ. Dei* for practicing theurgy and utilizing demons as intermediaries for the sake of furthering spiritual vision. As in *Civ. Dei*, in *Trin.* IV, he had no praise for these Platonists, only condemnation for the trickery involved in these practices. He returned as well to other points of critique which he also dealt with in *Civ. Dei*, which would also apply to Plotinus and do not require repeating here.¹⁰⁰ One especially interesting point of Augustine's critique con-

98 He also criticized Plato directly for his theory of recollection (*Trin.* XII.15.24). He mentions here reincarnation and the recollection of past lives (as alleged by Pythagoras) and reduces them to illusory fantasies of the type we see in dreams, which could be instilled into the mind by demons. Embracing these fantasies as truth, a person could subsequently deceive others by proclaiming and spreading the false doctrine of the transmigration of the soul.

99 *Trin.* IV.10.–11, 16.21–17.22.

100 E.g., *Trin.* IV.13.18: concerning the negation of the Incarnation of Christ, *Verbum Dei*; and IV.15.20: the arrogant attitude that we can ascend to God by our own strength. ('... but what

cerns the Platonist theory of Ideas, which he generously praised in *Civ. Dei* VIII.6.9.¹⁰¹ He asserts in *Trin.* that even though the Platonists were successful at contemplating the Ideas, their contemplation failed to bring them to respond to important questions concerning the concrete course of events in world history, the actual state of our world and the afterlife (*Trin.* IV.16.21). Augustine implies here that human history and the experience of material life provided important insights into human nature (especially considering that Christ led a material physical life), which certain Platonists neglected in various ways. Naturally Augustine had the bible in mind here in which the creation story and an eschatological vision were of particular significance.¹⁰² Augustine's criticism of these philosophers in book IV of *Trin.* went much further than just a few explicit remarks, as much more criticism of Platonism in this book can be inferred.¹⁰³

3 Augustine as Platonist: Synthesis

3.1 *Continuity and Discontinuity in Confessions and De civitate Dei*

Augustine's criticism of Platonism in *Civ. Dei* differs to some degree from his testimony in *Conf.* In his autobiography, he wrote of their unfortunate lack of conception of Christ's Incarnation, which was the reason they missed the importance of humility exemplified by the divine Son of God in his assimilation of a human life. He wrote there as well of their negligence of the importance of humility which derived from failing to see the great dissemblance between themselves and God. Additionally, Platonists lacked insight in human nature,

arrogance do people have, who are ashamed to mount the wood of the cross so that one can see the in the distance the overseas Fatherland?') Translation from Hill, *Trinity*.

101 Of interest to note is that book VIII of *Civ. Dei* is dated by O'Donnell to have been published in 417 and book IV of *Trin.* by Hombert (*Nouvelles recherches*, 45–80) between the years 414 and 415. One might wonder why Augustine did not mention his critique of the Platonist doctrine of Ideas in *Civ. Dei* as he did in *Trin.* IV? This critique is possibly more appropriate in the context of *Trin.* IV where he discusses the Incarnation and the Holy Scriptures, both of which reveal salvation history.

102 'So then we should not consult the philosophers about the future succession of ages or the resurrection of the dead, not even those who have understood to the best of their ability the eternity of the creator' (Translation: Hill.) Plotinus did however embrace Plato's eschatology (or teleology) which involved reincarnation (see Chapter 9). One of the passages where he described the afterlife is *Enn.* III.4.2–3, (from *On our Allotted Guardian Spirit*), the treatise in which Plotinus explicates his view on demons.

103 Certain researchers have suggested that the entire work *Trin.* was designed as a critique of Platonism or at least was composed to convince Platonists to convert to Christianity. (See Chapter 5.1.)

in the deficiencies of the will and its tendency towards self-aggrandizement and self-gratification. They also missed the realization of the necessity of God's grace, the assistance of Christ, to heal the deficiencies of the soul, the infirmities and brokenness of the heart. This lack of awareness prevented a truer participation with God.

By the time he wrote *Civ. Dei*, Augustine had apparently learned that there were Platonists who indeed recognized the weaknesses of the soul being attached to the body, requiring assistance and even God's grace to bring them to contemplation and union with the divine.¹⁰⁴ However, these were the Neo-Platonists who advocated the practice of theurgy to which he strongly opposed. On the other hand, he commended Plotinus for realizing that the blessed life was wholly dependent on God. His point concerning the arrogance of the Platonists which Augustine expressed in *Conf.* seemed to be softened in *Civ. Dei*, as Augustine underscored there that they did in fact recognize the ontological difference between human souls and the divinities which had created them (for example in VIII.6 and X.2); in other words, that God was immutable, the human mind, changeable.

However, in *Civ. Dei* X.2 he relayed Plotinus' view that through participation in God, one 'remained in a state of perfection and blessedness'. One might question, why Augustine refrained from attacking this 'puffed-up' viewpoint, as he did of the Plotinian ascent in *Conf.*—that holding one's focus on the divine light for a length of time to experience the state of perfect blessedness of God was a feat requiring strength which the human soul did not readily possess? Furthermore, Augustine recognized in *Civ. Dei* XIV.5 that Platonists did not consider the body to be the cause of evil, as the Manichaeans did (he claimed), that they, like him, believed that sin derived in the soul, as he himself expounded in *Conf.* III.8.16–19.17.¹⁰⁵ Another point of difference with his comments in *Conf.* is that Augustine criticized there that Platonists did not worship God (VII.9.14 and VIII.1.2). Yet in *Civ. Dei* V.20, he commended them for this. (One could speculate that he was possibly thinking of communal sacrificial-theurgical rituals, see *Civ. Dei* X.1. etc.) He even claimed in X.2 that Christians and Platonists essen-

104 In *Civ. Dei* X.29, Augustine acknowledged Porphyry's conception of grace but did not provide a description of what his doctrine entailed.

105 Augustine criticized Manichaeism for somewhat the same reasons as Plotinus admonished the Gnostics in his *Against the Gnostics* because they: 'disapprove of this universe, and blame the soul for its association with the body, and censure the director of this universe and identify its maker with the soul, and attribute to this universal soul the same affections as those which the souls in parts of the universe have.' (*Enn.* II.9.6.60–end. The translation is Armstrong's.) In *Enn.* II.9.9.44–83, Plotinus also criticized the Gnostics for their self-exaltation above God.

tially worshipped the same God. Worshipping God, as least as far as Plotinus was concerned, would have taken place in the form of personal prayer, the practice of contemplation and loving God. As such we can conclude that there were minor inconsistencies in his critique in *Civ. Dei* compared to *Conf.*, yet these are likely due to his increased knowledge of Platonism since his writing of the latter.

There was also a great deal of continuity between his remarks on Platonism from *Conf.* and those in *Civ. Dei*. Augustine's compliments of the Platonist view of the human mind and the activity of thinking as immaterial in *Civ. Dei* VIII.5–7, as well as his explanation of Plotinus' teaching of the eternal Forms (VIII.6), could be regarded as a sustained polemic against Manichaeism which he described in *Conf.*, such as against their materialist conceptions of God and the human soul. Accordingly, they failed to grasp the notion of transcendent causal principles (see note 45). The Platonists posited the eternal Forms existing in the Creator, which were distinguished from the invisible form principles manifesting in the shapes of material things. The contemplation of these Forms constituted an integral step in their ascent to God. It is particularly significant to underline here, that Augustine's embracing of Plotinus' philosophy was clearly instrumental for driving a wedge between himself—his ongoing spiritual development—and his Manichaean past. His compliments to Platonist teachings in *Civ. Dei* underscored as it were his disdain for Manichaeism—which he viewed through the lenses of Plotinus.

3.2 *Conclusions*

In spite of the minor inconsistencies in his comments on Platonism in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei*, we can nonetheless assess that the bulk of Augustine's descriptions of Plotinus' teaching seem fairly accurate. In the worst case, they appear sometimes to lack necessary nuances, which turn out nonetheless to be in Plotinus' favor, as meriting approval. (For example, see 'On the Problematic Position of the Divinity of the Soul' below.) We may also conclude that all aspects of Platonism which Augustine considered praiseworthy were elements which he himself understood to be true and integrated into his own doctrines. It would appear in *Trin.* IV that Augustine lost all his sympathy for Platonist philosophers—yet the philosophers he referred to there were Neo-Platonist theurgists, which excluded Plotinus. Even their doctrine of the Ideas required correction and in more ways than what he mentioned in *Trin.* IV.16.21 (discussed in Chapter 9.6.3). His borrowings from Plotinus' philosophy in this work are rampant—which invariably denote a great deal of inexplicit approbation. The Platonist notions of the immateriality of God and the origin of physical beauty and love in the divine are also important aspects in his doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The

rational soul or intellect (as image of God) which is immaterial and includes its judgment facility, are significant facets as well of Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*. Augustine's objection to the negation of the Incarnation of the Son of God and to the lack of understanding of the importance of humility in the teachings of Christ's human life, naturally still applies to Plotinus.

Considering Augustine's enormous effort to refute and discredit Porphyry and other theurgists,¹⁰⁶ it is remarkable that Plotinus falls in a distinctly favorable light in Augustine's commentary in *Civ. Dei*. Augustine allied Plotinus to the 'greatest of all philosophers', Plato, the philosopher who merited the highest praise. In Augustine's perspective, Plotinus was the one Platonist who had not lost sight of the Fatherland, as his successors seemed to do who were involved in demonology and theurgy. This was partly because Plotinus made no concessions to his point of view that an ascent to God was attained solely through intellectual contemplation and spiritual exercise. Plotinus did not support the practice of invoking demons as intermediaries, who were for him, although non-physical and immortal, nonetheless connected to the physical world and as such, subject to the same changeability and fallibility. Plotinus saw that demons were not gods and therefore did not merit any reverence. Augustine's aversion for demonology on the same grounds was more than perspicuous. It is highly likely that Augustine would have preferred Plotinus' 'Platonist orthodoxy'.

In *Civ. Dei* (and to some extent in *Conf.*), Augustine inadvertently demonstrated how he defined himself as a Platonist, drawing a demarcation line between the favorable and objectionable aspects. However he ultimately judged Platonist philosophy *pur sang* as insufficient for entrance into the Holy City of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, primarily due to its ignorance or rejection of Jesus Christ. Yet aside from this, Augustine painted a sympathetic picture of Plotinian philosophy. There remains a question: in *Retractationes* 1.1, his final work written in the last three years before his death, he scolded himself for not having been more critical of the Platonists in his earlier works. Could Augustine have been referring to his favorable portrait of Plotinus' philosophy in *Civ. Dei*? Or did he have the Platonist theurgists in mind?

106 Augustine did pay Porphyry a few compliments in *Civ. Dei*: he was the most scholarly of all philosophers (xix.22); had an uncommon sharpness of mind (x.32); and was congratulated by Augustine for his insight for having rejected Plato's belief in the transmigration of souls (x.30).

3.3 *On the Problematic Position of the Divinity of the Soul*

Another issue arises concerning Augustine's commentaries on Platonism, which is of importance to our final analyses in Chapters 11 and 12. As mentioned briefly at the end of section 1, Augustine criticized Manichaeism for the consubstantiality of the human soul with the divine (*Conf.* 111.6.10). However, Plotinus' standpoint was in fact that the highest part of the human soul, the intellect νοῦς, was of divine origin and thereby possessed a strong affiliation to the divine intelligible world of which it was an image (the divine Intellect). Sometimes he directly claimed that the human intellect was divine or that it never left the domain of the divine Intellect.¹⁰⁷ Yet Augustine did not mention the Platonist notion of the divinity of the soul in *Conf.*¹⁰⁸

He did indirectly criticize Plotinus for this view in *Conf.* VII.10.16–12.18, for his overly optimistic account on the ascent to God: failing to mention the difficulties the soul experienced and the fact that the will required divine assistance. Augustine's adamant rejection of the notion of the divinity of the soul was reinforced in his distinction between the Creator and the creature which was not only mentioned in *Conf.* VII, but also throughout *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.* It was therefore even more remarkable that in Augustine's evaluations of Platonists in *Civ. Dei*, he directly attributed to Plotinus the recognition of the differentiation between the divine substance of Light and the light in the souls of the material realm: that the human mind was changeable as opposed to the divine mind (VIII.6, X.2).

How can we account for this? Did Augustine possibly miss an important point of critique of Plotinus in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei*? Or did his remarks there simply require some accentuations? I have not yet been able to locate literature which addresses this question. Augustine's observations in *Civ. Dei* (VIII.6) that the Platonists recognized the division between the human and the divine were therefore technically speaking not entirely correct. The exposés in the next chapter will reveal that Plotinus' psychology in fact does contain a number of incongruences which demand explanation. In consideration of his entire

107 E.g., 'Our soul then is a divine thing and of a nature different [from the things of sense], like the universal nature of soul and the human soul is perfect when it has intellect.' (*Enn.* V.1.10–14). This treatise is n.b. considered by many as one of those which Augustine had likely studied before the writing of *Civ. Dei* and also while composing *Trin.* IX–X.

108 In *Civ. Dei* X.31, he does speak of the contention of certain Platonists that the soul is eternal and thus never had a beginning. They deviate from their teacher Plato, Augustine writes, who in the *Timaeus* described the creation of the world and the soul, asserting that the soul could live further in eternity. Augustine contrasts the belief of Porphyry with that of the other Platonists, the former claiming that the soul had a beginning but could have an existence in eternal blessedness.

doctrine of the human soul, it will prove to be of some difficulty to determine the exact status Plotinus attributed to the human soul.

This issue necessarily raises another question: were Augustine's points of critique of Platonists/Plotinian notions in *Conf.*, *Civ. Dei* and *Trin.* always well founded? For instance, was it justified to attack Porphyry as a true proponent of theurgy? Were all his descriptions of Platonist or Plotinus' teachings in *Civ. Dei* completely accurate? The upcoming chapters of this study will provide us with more material by which to judge Augustine's comments. This question will merit special attention when Augustine's remarks are subjected to an evaluation in Chapter 10.4.

Plotinus: Images, the Soul and the Ascent

1 Introduction

1.1 *Images in Plotinus*

Of utmost importance to Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* is the definition of the term 'image'. His definition not only includes his views on the material or physical world—the visual images, but also on the human soul and his theology of how the soul in ascending to God increases its resemblance to God. Augustine's doctrine of the image of God encompasses his analysis of the human mind and the identification of the image of God with the highest part of the soul, the intellect. As the forthcoming chapters will show, the topics of the image and intellect are of stellar importance as well for his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, in which he integrates the elements of knowledge and love. A great many elements in this doctrine are indebted to Plotinus' philosophy, such as the process of imaging, the notion of intellect and the ascent to God, which Augustine utilized to underpin his exegesis of Genesis and the Holy Trinity.

Hence before commencing with an intensive study of Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*, the philosophy of Plotinus will be treated in detail in which similar themes are highlighted. As part of this introduction, a short exposition will be given on the *Enneads*. The second section of this chapter will begin with general aspects of Plotinus' philosophy, namely, the theme of images or imaging in Plotinus' cosmology. His cosmology begins with a theogony: how the three Hypostases came into existence and how the latter two were images of their higher source. His conception of the Godhead will also be of interest here as it forms the foundation of Plotinus' metaphysics. The focus then shifts to his cosmogony, how the physical world and human beings were made, the latter, as soul and body.

Section 3 focuses on Plotinus' psychology and his view on how the human soul fits into his scheme of imaging. Plotinus' theory of Ideas plays a large role here, in explaining how images in the material world are produced which reflect the intelligible, divine world. The realms of the divine—the Godhead—are ontologically differentiated from their images, yet they always remain in contact. Plotinus often describes the interface here in terms of 'participation'. It is in the highest region of the soul, designated as the rational soul consisting of the reasoning faculty λόγος and intellect νοῦς, where the participation between Ideas and images most effectively take place. Gathering knowledge is the key

theme here, in particular for the intellect—as image of the Universal Intellect. Other features of Plotinus' psychology included in this portrayal are his conception of matter, evil, sin and error and his explicit position of the divinity of the human soul. The fourth section deals primarily with Plotinus' account of the ascent, involving the human intellect in its elevation by knowledge and the experience of love to approach the Godhead which it images.

1.2 *The Enneads*

Plotinus' 'Εννεάδες,¹ as they have come down to us, consist of 54 treatises, divided into six books. They were organized and edited by his pupil Porphyry and published around 301. Although there are treatises in the *Enn.* with titles which suggest a systematic elaboration on a certain topic, this is usually not the case. Most of the topics in this exposition on Plotinus' cosmology, and in particular, the themes of images and imaging,² are not concentrated in one treatise, but are spread throughout the *Enn.* His statements on imaging are usually short and concise; imaging in itself is more an underlying current throughout his doctrines. Hence, in order to speak of Plotinus' system of images and imaging in his cosmology, we must compile many brief remarks from different treatises.

Nonetheless, certain treatises are of particular interest to this study. They include first of all many of the treatises which have been suggested as what Augustine might have studied, discussed in the previous chapters. For instance, v.1. *On the Three Primary Hypostases*; i.6. *On Beauty*; v.3 *On the Knowing Hypostases and That Which is Beyond* and v.5. *That the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect and on the Good*. These treatises are lengthy and encompass both the themes of knowledge and love (such as in the 'thinking Intellect' and the 'loving Intellect'). The treatise vi.7 *On the Multiplicity of Forms and the One* will also be instrumental in this study for relaying Plotinus' account of the ascent by love and his notion of divine love deriving from the One or the Good—the first Hypostasis.

A short note on my references: I have omitted the chronological numbering of the treatises from the bibliography here.³ The chronological number of each particular treatise is included in 'Primary Sources' at the end of this

1 All quotes in English are from A.H. Armstrong: *Plotinus with an English translation, The Enneads* (London, 1989).

2 Studies providing the whole picture of Plotinus' imaging system, as this monograph sets out to do, are scarce. See Chapter 1 section 4.4 for the *status quaestionis* on this topic.

3 This is the number in parentheses; e.g., i.6 (1) which means that i.6. was the first treatise which Plotinus wrote.

book under PLOTINUS and 'Titles of *The Enneads*'. This means that the individual treatises of the *Enneads* are not arranged in chronological order. They were composed in different phases of Plotinus' philosophical career and generally show three phases of development.⁴ Emilsson writes: 'There have been attempts at showing a change of mind or at least significant doctrinal development in his thought ... but attempts at showing a radical change of mind have been largely unsuccessful ...'⁵ A study on the chronological development in the *Enneads* is also complicated by the fact that Plotinus often elucidates a particular subject in different contexts, resulting in assertions which seem, at least *prima facie*, incompatible. Emilsson argues that these differences in assertions cannot be readily connected with the chronology of treatises. For this reason, this study will not lend attention to the development of Plotinus' doctrines, yet it will indeed take into consideration discrepancies or paradoxes which occur in them.

At the same time, we must take into account that Augustine was born 150 years after Plotinus and his reception of the *Enneads* would have been more or less in the form we have now. Even in antiquity, Plotinus' *Enneads* were considered challenging literature. We know this because Plotinus' editor (and student) Porphyry, apparently felt compelled after their publishing to construct a systematic summary of the most important points (for example in *Sententiae*).⁶

4 P. Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard* (Paris, 1997, 2010) 211–214.

5 E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect* (Oxford, 2007) 17–18; Blumenthal, *Psychology*, 4.

6 *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes* or Ἀφορμαὶ πρὸς τὰ νοητά: *Resources for Approaching the Intelligible World*. For many decades, there has been debate as to whether this work was a kind of introduction or a handbook to *The Enneads* or whether it portrayed Porphyry's own views which might include possible deviations from his teacher. These discussions are well illustrated in, for example, the first pages of S.K. Strange's article 'Porphyry and Plotinus' Metaphysics', in: G. Karamanolis and A. Sheppard (eds.) *Studies in Porphyry* (London, 1998) 17–34. See also e.g., A. Smith, 'The Non-Commentary Tradition', in: P. Remes and S. Slaveva Griffin (eds.) *Routledge's Handbook of Neoplatonism* (New York, 2014) 115–125 and 120 under 'Summaries'.

J. O'Donnell makes the very plausible suggestion that Augustine's introduction to Platonist philosophy could have been through first reading summaries of Plotinus' *Enneads* from other philosophical works, such as the *Sententiae* of Porphyry. These hypotheses cannot be ascertained, for, among others reasons, *Sententiae* is only available to us in fragments [*Augustine Confessions. Volume 2 Commentary Books 1–7* (Oxford, 1992) 432.].

2 Images and Imaging in Plotinus' Theogony and Cosmology

2.1 Terminology of Imaging

Plotinus' elaboration of images was unique in the Platonist tradition of imaging. He gave them definition and a vocabulary, adapted to his own thought.⁷ In a nutshell, there are two main aspects in Plotinus' philosophy of imaging: the nature of a divine principle and the image thereof which imitates it, striving for resemblance to that divine principle.⁸ Therefore Plotinus' process of imaging is intimately allied with his theogony, with the procession of the two divine Hypostases from the primary principle the One. Often labelled as 'emanation',⁹ the successive *πρόοδος* from the One brings about the emergence of the visible world.¹⁰ The world perceived by the physical senses derives from the archetypal principles, the Ideas or *κόσμος νοητός* which exist in the second Hypostasis, the Intellect. The imaging process however begins in the first stages of the theogony and is closely allied with the functions of the divine *Λόγος* which is translated here as 'a creative expression or utterance'. An image imitates its model and in this sense has a share in it or participates in it. As such everything in the cosmos is always connected to the Godhead. A *Λόγος*, as we shall see, is what essentially puts the imaging process in operation. Plotinus' conception of the *Λόγος* will be elaborated here as well as how it is intimately associated to Plotinus' doctrine of the Ideas as the active force (*ἐνέργεια*) and formation principle.

Before commencing with Plotinus' cosmology, let us briefly view the terminology of images in the process of the making of the world: the divine Ideas or Forms (sing. *τό εἶδος*,¹¹ *μορφή*, *ἀρχέτυπος*) are the causal principles of images

7 R. Ferwerda provides an inventory of Plotinus' use of the term 'image' in association with 'mirror' with the meaning and references, *'La signification des images'*, 9–16.

8 Bochet (*Imago*, 508–509) treats Plotinus' usage of the term 'images': the concept of the image interiorized and spiritualized in: *Enn.* v.3.8, v.5.5, v.2.1, I.6, 7–9, and VI.9.11.

9 The terms Plotinus used for the translation of 'creation' usually has to do with the verb 'making': *ποιεῖν* (e.g., II.2.13). The term 'emanation' is often applied to Plotinus' depiction of the process in which the world was made, however he himself uses this term infrequently. In this treatise, Armstrong does not translate the forms of the verb *γεννᾶν* as 'create', but rather 'generate' or 'beget' in order to better depict i.e., how the *Νοῦς* brings forth the Soul (v.1.7.30–40). On Plotinus' theory of emanation in all its facets and the metaphors utilized, see A.H. Armstrong, '11. Emanation in Plotinus', in: A.H. Armstrong, *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London, 1979) 61–66.

10 *Enn.* II.3.18.18: 'This visible universe, then, is properly called an image always in process of being made.' *Εἰκότως οὖν λέγεται οὗτος ὁ κόσμος εἰκὼν ἀεὶ εἰκονιζόμενος*.

11 J.H. Sleeman and Gilbert Pollet [*Lexicon Plotinianum* (Leuven, 1980) 290–297] explain the Greek terms with references in *Enn.*: *τό εἶδος*: 1b. Contrasted or associated with *ὅλη* (294–

manifesting in the world; the images (sing. εἰκών,¹² εἰδωλον,¹³ ἵνδαλμα). As such, the process of creation through emanation can be seen as the coming of existence of the world of images perceived by the physical senses, which reflect in some way their source in the Godhead. Plotinus' vision of the ascent runs in the opposite direction of emanation: the perception of the images related to their corresponding source, generally speaking, from the εἰδωλα to εἶδη. Plotinus uses the specific terms for imaging interchangeably.¹⁴

2.2 *Plotinus' Theogony*

2.2.1 The One, the Good

The initial phase of the formation of the universe entails how the Godhead and makers of the world came into being.¹⁵ The ultimate origin of the world and all life in it is a Hypostasis which Plotinus calls the One τὸ ἓν or the Good τὸ ἀγαθόν.¹⁶ Recall from Chapter 2.1 that this was the monistic principle which Augustine preferred to the Manichaean Godhead, the latter of which was divided into good and evil. This principle of absolute unity (or all-unifying principle) is so far removed from anything thinkable or recognizable that any description of it is impossible. Apart from its designation as 'the Good', the One can have no predicates (*Enn.* v.3.13, 14 and 16). Paradoxically it is everything and

296); 1c. of intelligible Forms; 1d. kind, sort, species. See also the Greek term ἰδέα related to verbs such as ἰδεῖν: 'to see'.

12 *Lexicon Plotinianum* (301–302): εἰκών: a. portrait; b. likeness, image; c. comparison, image; εἰκονίζειν: to make an image, pass.: εἰκότως (11.3.18.17); εἰδωλον: a. image in mirror; b. image, general likeness, phantom; c. Epicurean film; d. phantom ghost. (The latter sense corresponds to φαντασία which is the visual material image or its reproduction in the mind.); See also Ferwerda, 'La signification des images'. An added note of interest: εἰκών is also the term used in the Septuaginta for Gen. 1.26–27: 'Let us make man to our image and likeness'. See note 31 on εἶδος. A synonym for 'image' is also 'trace' ἕχνος, see note 20.

13 Note the similarity to the word 'idols': εἰδωλον is in fact the term used for idols in the New Testament. LZ: This would surely make sense in Plotinus' thinking as a reference to material things or entities which are not divine and are in some way venerated at the cost of their causal principles or the hypostases.

14 See Aubin ('L' image') who claims that these Greek terms which we generally translate as 'image' are not usually referring to one exclusive form or image. In *Enn.* v.3, Plotinus often uses the term εἰκών in the context of the Soul as image and the term εἰδωλον when referring to the image of λόγοι σπερματικοί in the physical body. Yet when Plotinus refers to an image as soul moving in an upward direction, then the term εἶδος is also often used. In 1v.4.13.3, Plotinus refers to Nature-Soul also as ἵνδαλμα (image) of the World Soul. See Fattal, *Image, mythe, logos et raison* (Paris, 2009) 35 note 29, 38, note 32.

15 I.e., the treatise v.1: *On the Three Primary Hypostases*.

16 I.e., vi.9: *On the Good, or the One*; vi.9.3.

everywhere yet resembles nothing (VI.7.32.10–15).¹⁷ It is a complete whole and totally transcendent. The divine realm in Plotinus' philosophy, which includes three Hypostases, is characterized by its transcendence, its existence in eternity and unlimited life where nothing is material or changeable.¹⁸ During the procession which ultimately brings forth all things, the One itself remains completely motionless. The procession is however accompanied by the activity or the energy of the Λόγος as a sort of utterance or creative expression of the One or the Good. With the energy of the Λόγος, the One brings a new Hypostasis into existence, Νοῦς or the divine Intellect, Mind.¹⁹

2.2.2 The Absolute Intellect: Νοῦς

The result of this new entity is duplicity and a multiplicity which constitute a unity. The One always remains exactly as it is, yet the new Hypostasis is less perfect than the One, due to the fact that absolute perfect unity and simplicity no longer manifest here. In this sense, the Νοῦς is an image, but not a perfect copy of the One.²⁰ The actualization of the Hypostasis Intellect (or Divine Mind or Spirit) now takes place in roughly two phases: of the desiring and thinking Intellect.²¹

Plotinus' depiction of how the Νοῦς came into existence is of seminal importance, not only to his understanding of the human intellect as image of God, but also because of Augustine's familiarity with it, having borrowed many aspects

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- 17 A. Pigler discusses the enigmatic character of these assertions: how can something which is everything and nothing at the same time be the source of all life? *Plotin une métaphysique de l'amour, L'amour comme structure du monde intelligible* (Paris, 2002) 27–74.
- 18 See A.H. Armstrong, 'v. Plotinus's Doctrine of the Infinite', (1953) in: A.H. Armstrong (ed.) *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London, 1979) 48–58. Armstrong deems the One as a personal God. Armstrong: 'Plotinus is the first Greek philosopher to try and work out with any sort of precision the senses in which infinity can be predicated of the Godhead and to distinguish them from the evil infinity of formlessness and indefinite multiplicity... Plotinus is therefore the first philosopher, at any rate, in the West, to attempt any serious treatment of the question of divine infinity ...' (p. 57). Armstrong discusses Plotinus' influence concerning this matter on Christian thought (p. 48).
- 19 In particular V.9. *On Intellect, the Forms, and Being*; Also III.2.2.15.20–25; or V.1.7.44–46.
- 20 The term image εἰκὼν is used here in V.1.7; but in VI.7, the term trace ἵχνος is also frequently used. V.1.7.1–5: 'But we must say that Intellect is an image of that Good ... what has come into being must be in a way that Good, and retain much of it and be a likeness of it.' Εἰκὼνα δὲ ἐκείνου λέγομεν εἶναι τὸν νοῦν ... καὶ εἶναι ὁμοίότητά πρὸς αὐτό ... See further on the Intellect as image: V.1.7.1.
- 21 The desiring Intellect: e.g., *Enn.* III.8.11.20–end; the thinking and desiring Intellect: e.g., V.3.7; VI.7.35.20–28.

of it. The Intellect came into being as a Λόγος from the One or the Good,²² and as undeveloped. Initially, it longed to understand its source. This longing was a result of the attraction of the Beauty τὸ Καλόν, Charm Χάρις and Love Ἔρως which are radiated by the One. The Intellect then turned (ἐπιστροφή²³) to contemplate the One—the Good. The result of this contemplation was the reception of the fullness and abundance of the One in which the Νοῦς became pure Thought. This was accomplished by the Νοῦς receiving Life from the One and thinking ‘I am’. Accordingly, the notions of Being and Thought were fused in the notion of Intellect. Having received these traits from the One, the Νοῦς therefore became Being. In this sense, the One was essentially the source of all Being yet it was not Being itself, as Plotinus insisted, because the One can have no predicates.²⁴

Thought as an expression of the Intellect became multiple thoughts which comprised the intelligible world, κόσμος νοητός, as Forms or Ideas (sing. εἶδος, pl. εἶδη).²⁵ The Ideas were the models for all life in the material world which contained as well the principles of Life and Being. Thus there existed a triad of perfect unity in the Intellect, which consisted of Thinking, Being and Life.²⁶ The Νοῦς, as universal Intellect, can be characterized as pure, perfect Thought which is immediate, intuitive, eternal and contemplative (non-discursive). These characteristics are key elements as well in Plotinus’ doctrine of the human intellect and self-knowledge, and are also important in his depiction of the ascent.

22 Pigler argues against J.M. Rist [*Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge, 1967) 84–102] (among others) that Plotinus intended to mean that the Νοῦς is in fact a veritable henological Λόγος, coming forth from the One. ‘De la possibilité ou l’impossibilité d’un *logos* hénologique’, in: Fattal, *Logos et langage*, 189–209.

23 The Greek term ἐπιστροφή is the equivalent of the Latin: *conversio*. The way Plotinus uses it here is the same way Augustine uses it as in *conversio* in *Gen. litt* 111. Yet there are conceptual differences. See M. Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin suivi de Plotin face aux gnostiques* (Paris, 2006) 19–42.

24 Plotinus claims that in the One there is no substance, it is beyond Being. Substance exists only in the Intellect and below. Plotinus wrote many treatises on substance such as VI.7, 8 and 9. Yet ironically there remain many questions, for example, as to whether Plotinus posits a difference in quantity or quality between the substance of the Soul and the Intellect? K. Corrigan does not provide an answer to this [‘Essence and existence in the *Enneads*’, *CCP* (1999) 105–129, 105]. (This question can be applied as well to the Hypostasis Soul and the human souls.) In *Enn.* VI.9.1.27–28, Plotinus mentions in a single passage that ‘different degrees of unity give rise to different degrees of being.’ Therefore, seeing how the Soul encompasses less of a unity than the Intellect, as we will see in the next subsection on Soul, she would indeed have in quality or quantity a lesser degree of Being or substance.

25 E.g., VI.7.2.14–end.

26 V.1.4.25–30, V.3.5.29–37, V.9.10.10.13.

The Intellect, just as the One, is totally transcendent and always remains exclusively in its own divine realm.²⁷ It reproduces itself further by expressing itself (Λόγος), dividing itself into individual intellects (also referred to as Λόγοι).²⁸ Plotinus calls the Intellect a God: the Demiurge (*Enn.* v.1.8.5). By means of a creative expression Λόγος, the Νοῦς produces as well a new Hypostasis: the Soul.

2.2.3 The Divine All-Soul Ψυχή

The Soul²⁹ exists at a further distance away from the One than the Νοῦς which means that it is less perfect and more differentiated than its source. Just as the Νοῦς above, the Soul turns to its origin, contemplates the Νοῦς, and in doing so receives its properties: Life, Thought and Being.³⁰ It also receives the individual intellects (designated as individual λόγοι) and the Forms or models of Being for the material world which it will realize at a later stage. The Soul is now an image (εἰκών³¹) of the Intellect. 'Soul ... is ... an image of Intellect; just as a thought in its utterance (Λόγος) is an image of the thought in soul, so Soul itself is the expressed thought (Λόγος) of Intellect, and its whole activity, and the life which it sends out to establish another reality ...'.³² The noetic properties which the Soul receives from the Intellect will remain only in the highest region of the Soul, which is likewise designated as Νοῦς. Yet the Soul—and even her highest region—is an inferior image of that which it images (*Enn.* v.1.7.40–50). It occupies the lowest (third) level of the hierarchic, hypostatic realm under the Νοῦς. Like the Νοῦς, it too possesses a certain degree of unity which is why Plotinus designates it as the 'All-Soul.' Divided into three different regions, the lowest is involved with the creation of matter and the sense world. As a Formative Principle it brings matter and form together with its partner and co-maker in this process, the divine Λόγος, as will be elucidated below.

By its own expression or Λόγος, the Soul produces two lower regions which will always belong to the domain of the total Soul. The region just below the

27 V.3.7.13–25, v.4.2.21–37; Emilsson, *Intellect*, 24–29.

28 E.g., III.2.2.25, IV.3.5.10. These individual intellects are human intellects.

29 E.g., the entire book IV and its nine treatises are devoted to the subject of the soul.

30 Throughout III.8: *On Nature, Contemplation and the One*.

31 Another term applied to the Soul-Noῦς is εἶδος, e.g., VI.7.20.10. Also, Soul is designated as the 'trace' ἵχνος of the Intellect, e.g., VI.7.20.13.

32 V.1.3.6–10: ἡ ψυχὴεἰκὼν τίς ἐστι νοῦ· οἷον λόγος ὁ ἐν προφορᾷ λόγου τοῦ ἐν ψυχῇ, οὕτω τοι καὶ αὐτὴ λόγος νοῦ καὶ ἡ πάντα ἐνέργεια καὶ ἦν προΐεται ζωὴν εἰς ἄλλου ὑπόστασιν. See further on the Soul as image: *Enn.* III.2.1, 24–25; IV.2.2.52 and v.1.8.26.

Soul-Νοῦς is called the World Soul which is responsible for creating the universe. [Plotinus also sometimes speaks of an intelligible World Body, which emanates from Soul (IV.3.8.47–48)]. The World Soul then divides itself into individual parts or souls (IV.3.2.55–60, etc.). This came about by its turning to contemplate its source (the Ideas in the Νοῦς or the Νοῦς-Soul) and then expressing itself (Λόγος) (IV.3.5). While doing so, the Soul and her activities merge with the activities of the universal Λόγος or Reason. (Because it unites with the Λόγος, the World Soul is also referred to as the Universal Λόγος.) The third realm of the Soul is called Nature or Φύσις,³³ which creates matter and the corporeal world by reproducing itself further as well, thereby augmenting the already existent state of multiplicity. The World Soul is thus Nature's source of production power.

2.3 *Plotinus' Ontology: the Relationship between Two Worlds*

Before proceeding to Plotinus' view of the formation of the material universe, a few preliminary remarks are necessary. Plotinus differentiated the realm of the divine Hypostases from the visible world according to its being: the divine is eternal, immutable and infinite; the material world is temporal, changeable and ephemeral. The realm of the One, the Intellect and the Soul are completely transcendent and immaterial. It is only the Soul—its lower part, Nature—and the Λόγος which have contact with matter or physical beings, as will be illustrated shortly. Divine Being is true Being; matter cannot contain true being, thus it belongs at the lowest spectrum of existence.

2.4 *Imaging: the Intelligible World: Forms and Ideas*

In the summary of Plotinus' theology, the Forms or Ideas³⁴ were only mentioned briefly yet they require now a more extensive treatment, as they serve as a major focal point of this study. Plotinus' theory of Ideas is actually a revision of Plato's conception,³⁵ yet there are a number of significant differences

33 111.8; 11.3.16–18. Despite the impression its name makes, Soul-Nature, as the lowest component of the All-Soul, is transcendent and divine.

34 Plotinus' elaboration of the doctrine of the Forms, the Ideas, the intelligible world are scattered throughout the *Enneads*. These treatises in particular concentrate on this theme: 111.8: *On Nature, Contemplation and the One*; v.8: *On Intelligible Beauty*; v.9: (esp. v.9.8–9) *On Intellect, the Forms, and Being*; v1.6: *On Numbers*; and v1.7: *How the Multiplicity of Forms Came Into Being: and on the Good*, especially: v1.7.2.14–end.

35 Plato's theory of Ideas: *Meno* 71–81, 85–86; *Cratylus* 389–390, 439–440; *Symposium* 210–211; *Phaedo* 73–80, 109–111; *Republic* 111.402–403, v.472–483, VI–VII.500–517, IX–X.589–599; *Phaedrus* 248–250, 265–266; *Parmenides* 129–135; *Theaetetus* 184–186; *Sophist* 246–248,

in Plotinus' interpretation which are not necessary to go into here. We can begin by relaying Plotinus' conception that the Ideas or Forms (the intelligible world) which exist in the divine Intellect are considered real, living entities with powerful creative potential. They are the archetypes of all existing things. This means that for all existing things, there exists a causal, intelligible counterpart (VI.7.2.14–25).

There are also Ideas-Forms which convey concepts not possessing a material counterpart (for example: Virtues or the notion of Justice). The Ideas also play a significant role in Plotinus' view on the formation of the universe as well in his epistemology. They have a powerful function in the human mind in its potential to develop itself: by contemplating them, the mind comprehends the relationship of the image to its paradigm, as illustrated in *Enn.* VI.7.2.14–25, as 'its reason why'. The mind also grasps abstract, transcendent principles, discovers true reality and in doing so, assimilates the Being of the *Noûs* (v.g: *On Intellect, The Forms and Being*). This assimilation makes up a part of the actualization of the human intellect, which entails progressively resembling the divine *Noûs*. It leads to (or sometimes just entails) the unification of the self with God (which will be discussed further up in more detail in section 4: Ascent). We will now resume with Plotinus' depiction of the transmission of the Ideas or Forms from the divine Intellect to matter and how they became images. 'For each and every primary reality is not what is perceived with the senses: for the form on the matter in the things of sense is an image of the real form and every form which is in something else comes to it from something else and is a likeness of that form from which it comes.' (v.9.17–20). This involves the form-donation process which was initiated when the second and third Hypostases came into existence.

2.5 *Imaging: a Process of Formation—the Ideas and the Λόγος/Λόγοι*

The first manifestation of imaging began in the divine Intellect, which Plotinus designated as an Image, the *Λόγος* or a trace of the One. The Intellect, being closest to the One, resembled the One more than any other entity. Yet there existed dissemblance as well. The Intellect was not the same as the One, which was absolute oneness, as it contained duplicity as well as multiplicity. Thus the relationship of the *Noûs* to the One exemplified the general definition of 'image' in Plotinus' philosophy: it was always inferior to that which it imaged. The image was also always totally dependent on its original (VI.4.10.1–15). Every-

251–259; *Timaeus* 27–52; *Philebus* 14–18; *Seventh Letter* 342–345; *The Seventh Letter* (authorship is disputed).

thing here below had an existence in some way less authentic than that of its archetype. As Plato, Plotinus expressed this dependence in two ways: by speaking of participation μέθεξις³⁶ or imitation μίμησις.³⁷ The image was never a perfect copy; a hierarchy between the original and the copy was always preserved on account of the increased multiplicity in the image, which degraded its being.

After having turned to the One and contemplated its source, the divine Intellect acquired from its origin its own core substantial properties: Thought, Being and Life.³⁸ The imaging procession was instigated with the generation and transmission of these properties and became inherent in the Ideas or Forms as the Thoughts of the divine Intellect. The Νοῦς communicated these properties to the Soul in an act of generation or creation: it reproduced itself by means of an expression (Λόγος). When the Soul longed to know her source, it turned to contemplate the Intellect and in doing so, she received the same properties of the Intellect and the Forms above her. This activity constituted her formation. In becoming an image (Λόγος) of the Intellect in her highest region, the Soul-Intellect accordingly transmitted the Forms further to that which came after her by means of a Λόγος—an expression and the reproduction of herself.

The Soul-Intellect, as an image of the Intellect, is always inferior to the divine Intellect, due to her greater multiplicity which substantiates her weakness. Yet by virtue of her highest region, the Soul is also always connected to the divine Intellect. Although the divine Intellect and Soul-Intellect are separate entities, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the two in the *Enneads*. The Intellect, having engendered the Soul, is closer to the One and more powerful than the Soul-Νοῦς. Thus their resemblance is strong; yet by nature of the hierarchy of the Hypostases, there is also great dissemblance. From this point onward in Plotinus' cosmology, a transmission of the Ideas takes place through the generating process of the Λόγος and a parallel splitting up of itself into Λόγοι. The Λόγοι transmit the individual intellects and the Forms further down the line, ultimately, to matter. Throughout this transmission, they continuously produce images within the hierarchy of being.³⁹

36 E.g., μετάληψις, μετοχή, μετέχειν; *Enn.* 1.6.6, 1.8.5, 11; V.5.4, VI.5.7–8.

37 E.g., μίμημα, μιμείσθαι; 1.2.3.7, 28, 41; 11.1.5.8, 9.2.3; V.3.7.33, V.8.12.15; V.9.3.36–37; Armstrong, 'Platonic Mirrors', 147–181, 147–148.

38 The triad of Being, Life and Thought in the Intellect which will be of importance later in Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* in *Trin.*

39 On matter and form in *Enn.*: e.g., 11.4–5; 7.3.12–13; 11.6.6, 12–15, V.9.5.17–19, 1.8.8.13–16. Plotinus provides here a neatly systematic explanation for how the transcendent Ideas manifest immanently in matter. Plotinus accomplished this by borrowing principles from Aristotle and the Stoa. He was aware of Aristotle's critique of Plato's positioning the Ideas

The World Soul was designated as an image of her source: the Soul-Intellect.⁴⁰ While contemplating the Ideas in her higher region—the Soul-Intellect, the World Soul communicated the Forms to her lower kin. She then became united with the Universal Λόγος and subsequently began to create by splitting herself into individual souls. These merged with the individual intellects, the λόγοι: that is, altogether the individual souls were then called λόγοι, having an intellect as higher part. The World Soul's communication of Forms, including the individual intellects and souls, was what permitted Soul-Nature (the image of the World Soul) to be operative and productive.

The crux of the matter here is that the Λόγος principle is of seminal importance in Plotinus' vision of the formation of the universe. Furthermore, this entity or principle was of no negligible influence on Augustine's doctrine of creation and its influence was also present in his doctrine of the *imago Dei*. Before proceeding further with Plotinus' cosmology, it will be useful for the sake of clarity to reiterate the diverse functions and properties of the Λόγος principle which have come up in this exposition thus far.

in the realm of transcendence and of Aristotle's position on how the forms manifest immanently in matter. Plotinus was also familiar with Aristotle's doctrine articulated in *Categories of Being*. Yet Plotinus obviously did not completely accept Aristotle's critique of Plato's view on the transcendent Forms. In Plotinus' cosmogony, the Ideas are still the transcendent causes of all existing things. Plotinus borrowed the doctrine of the Λόγος from Stoic philosophy (which was in turn influenced by Aristotle's notion of the Λόγος). Plotinus transformed this as well, as such, by 'de-materializing' the Stoic Λόγος endowing it with transcendent origin and functions. To explain how form conjoins with matter, Plotinus does not indicate that it is the pure transcendent Idea which penetrates and forms matter. It is only the image εἰδωλόν of the transcendent Form which manifests in physical visible things. This image is inferior to εἶδος, the transcendent, divine Idea. See M. Fattal, *Logos et image chez Plotin* (Paris, 1998) e.g., 29–44.

Plotinus also assimilated Aristotle's theory of Universal Intellect as cause of all Being and as penetrating through all of Life by the power and potential of the δύναμις, as well as Aristotle's characterization of the Universal Intellect as Thought and Being. But he transformed it by 'platonizing' it: by placing the location of the Ideas in the Intellect and then rejecting Aristotle's view on the Universal Intellect as the first and foremost cause of existence. Plotinus posits the ultimate cause as the One which is above all Thought and Being. See M. Fattal, *Image, mythe, logos et raison*, 35–62; J. Halfwassen, *Plotin und der Neoplatonismus* (Munich, 2004) 17–19.

40 Plotinus calls the parts of the Soul 'Soul Sisters', e.g., IV.3.6.14.

2.6 *Synopsis: Plotinus' Doctrine of the Λόγος and the Λόγοι in the Process of Imaging*

In the exposition of Plotinus' theogony, many different aspects of the Λόγος were mentioned.⁴¹ For example, the Λόγος was in regard to all three Hypostases an 'expression' which was always accompanied by a creative process or a reproduction of the Hypostases themselves. The first manifestation of the Λόγος took place in the realm of the Νοῦς which was a Λόγος of the One. By contemplating its source, the Νοῦς received the intelligible world. The Νοῦς divided itself into individual intellects, each intellect comprising an individual λόγος. When the Νοῦς expressed itself and the Soul came into being, the Soul turned to contemplate its origin. When the highest part of the Soul became Intellect, it expressed itself in the same way. The region of the Soul was the second level in which the Λόγος operated. We also saw in Plotinus' theogony that the World Soul eventually became the World Λόγος and subsequently divided itself up into individual souls. These individual souls contained intellects which were originally Λόγοι from the total Νοῦς.

Shortly we will deal with the lowest region of the Soul (Nature), where form and matter were brought together to make bodies for the individual souls. This constitutes the third level of the Λόγος activity where the visible world was fabricated by Λόγοι σπερματικοί.⁴² In sum, we have seen that the Λόγος was not only a creative expression, it was also an entity which divided itself into individual parts just as the Intellect and the Soul had done and functioned on three levels of existence: at the level of the Νοῦς, of the Soul and of the visible world.⁴³ The divine Λόγος was hence transcendent as well as immanent. (The first two Hypostases were completely transcendent from the material world; Nature-Soul, like the Λόγος, was both transcendent and immanent.) In its transcendent divine existence, the Λόγος emanated originally from the One and delivered the intelligible Forms from the Νοῦς to the Soul. In the sense world, the incorporeal Λόγοι, considered by Plotinus to be images of the eternal Ideas, were thus immanent in matter, which will be explained in the sub-section below. Important here to note is that Plotinus also specified that the transcendent, divine Λόγος was identical to the Forms, designating it as Form principle (for example in *Enn.* III.2.2.36). In the processes described above, the Λόγος served as representative of the Intellect in the lower realms of existence.⁴⁴ Through

41 This excerpt is from Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος', 235–261, 250–251.

42 III.2.2.20; III.7; V.9.6.11 and 19; See: Agaësse-Solignac, 'Le Logos et les Logoi chez Plotin', *BA* 48, 654–657.

43 III.2.2.15–40; III.3.5.10; III.3.4.20, 25–30.

44 III.2.11 and 15; V.9.6. / III.2.20–30; III.3.4. On Aristotle as Plotinus' source for equating the Λόγος with idea εἶδος. See Fattal, *Logos, image*, 32–33.

its creation-formation activities, it was directly responsible for the process of 'imaging'. Additionally, individual souls were designated with the term λόγοι.

In some passages, it appears as if the active, divine Λόγος could be a separate hypostasis, especially being designated—alongside the divine Soul—as the Maker of the universe. But this was not Plotinus' intention; the Λόγος is a divine function or force which exists and operates in conjunction with the three Hypostases.

An aspect of significance here is that the divine Λόγος, apart from being a creative and formative principle (III.2.2.36), is predominantly a principle of reason and order.⁴⁵ Within the production process, it provides the cosmos and the intelligible world with a rational foundation in compliance with set laws. Altogether, the Λόγος is the structure, the plan and the plot.

As will be explained in section three, the divine Λόγος is also the origin of the reasoning facility in the human mind:⁴⁶ every individual soul is a reflection of it at the highest, transcendent level. It provides the human intellect with its mental structure which it needs to process and assimilate the images entering the perception organs. The human reasoning facility διάνοια or discursive reasoning—resides in the highest—the rational region—of the soul. Plotinus also attributed to the Λόγος an active and significant role in the soul's contemplation and longing for beauty, accordingly, in her return to the One.⁴⁷

It also fulfills an important providential function in the world.⁴⁸ As mentioned in Chapter 2.2, Augustine commended Plotinus for his principle of Divine Providence (*Civ. Dei* x.17) which was explicitly designated in the *Enn.* as the Λόγος. In this exposition, the doctrine of the Λόγος will be predominantly treated in the context of the process of formation and imaging in the cosmos, as well as in Plotinus' psychology and epistemology. In the conceptual comparison between Augustine and Plotinus in Chapter 6 ('Divine Mediation: Λόγος and *Verbum*'), the similarities and differences between these two divine entities will be analyzed and the influence shown of Plotinus' conception of Λόγος and λόγοι on Augustine's principles of *Rationes* as well as on his conception of the creator *Verbum Dei* from his doctrine of creation. Now we will resume with Plotinus' cosmogony and the creation of the material, sense world.

45 E.g., II.7.3; III.2.14–15, III.3.4.5–10; III.8.8.13–16; VI.9.5.

46 IV.3.16, 7; III.2. 2, 3; III.3. 4.

47 Such as the Λόγος' association with Forms and contemplating Beauty, e.g.: I.6.2.27–28. See M. Fattal, 'Beauté et métaphysique chez Plotin: le rôle du *logos* venu des dieux', in: Fattal, *Logos et langage*, 301–313.

48 Plotinus wrote two treatises on divine Providence: *Enn.* III.2 and III.3. See Boot, 'Voorzienigheid'.

2.7 *Cosmogony of the Visible World*

2.7.1 Making Material Images: Joining Form to Matter⁴⁹

The visible world as we know it is a product of the divine entities Nature-Soul and the Λόγος. To recapitulate briefly, Nature was the third and lowest region of the divine Soul. This Soul entity produced matter together with the Λόγος, the latter of which, at an earlier stage—in the realm of the Νοῦς—had split itself up into individual λόγοι. These individual intellects-λόγοι had been received by the World Soul who subsequently divided herself as well into individual souls. These were joined to these λόγοι-intellects.

Now at the level of Nature, the Λόγοι σπερματικοί serve as germinating principles or creative formative forces which carry the internal laws of growth and development of physical and material structures. They also contain the characteristics of the various species of living beings with the capacity to reproduce and are as such designated as form principles. Λόγοι σπερματικοί are like seeds which grow and evolve within matter, containing the growth potential and the structuring principles of matter and/or soul together. At this point, Plotinus' depiction of the production process becomes confusing. There are apparently λόγοι σπερματικοί for the human body and as well as for the human soul. Additionally, Soul (Nature) and Λόγος (or Λόγοι σπερματικοί) are so intimately intertwined in their tasks that it is difficult to separate their functions (v.9.6).

Nature-Soul creates matter, then transforms it by forming it, that is, endowing to matter the 'reasons'—Λόγοι which she had received from the World Soul. Plotinus calls this Form-giving to matter a 'donation' by the Λόγοι. This donation of productive forces, intending to inform that which has no form, is completed spontaneously, instantly and without mediation. Plotinus also depicts the production of Nature-Soul in the following way: while receiving from the World Soul the Forms (the Λόγοι) and their illumination,⁵⁰ she subsequently illuminates matter and bodies (with the Λόγοι) thereby making them an image εἰδωλόν of the Forms.⁵¹ The Λόγοι donate to matter the visible form or recognizable shape according to the laws of species.⁵² Nature-Soul and Λόγος, according to

49 Plotinus posits two kinds of matter: divine, intelligible matter (the Idea Matter) and physical, visible matter (II.4.5; III.8.11.4). See note 98. / III.8.3; IV.3.13 and 15; IV.4.39; v.9.6.11, 19; III.2.2.20; II.2.3.15–17. See Fattal, *Image, logos, mythe*, 38–45, notes 32, 33 and 37. For a detailed study of the relationship between matter, form and seminal reasons in Plotinus, see *ibidem*, 51–56 and *Logos, image*, 35–38; Plotinus' transformation of the Stoic theory of providential Universal Reason and seminal reasons, *ibidem*, 30–31, note 1.

50 II.9.2 and 3.1–5.

51 v.3.8.4–9; II.4.5.18–20.

52 See Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος', 235–261, 251–252.

Plotinus, are thus continuously producing—in analogy to the sun, in the sense that as long as the sun exists, it will always shine its rays down below.⁵³

2.7.2 The Making of Human Beings

Both Nature-Soul and the Λόγοι are involved with the production of physical bodies which will house the individual souls.⁵⁴ A short recapitulation: when Nature-Soul came into existence from the World Soul, the World Soul also divided itself into parts, which became individual human souls or λόγοι. Hence, the human soul ψυχή was produced at an earlier phase than the human body. The body came into existence at the same time as physical matter, evolving gradually from the rational seed principles. Plotinus speaks extensively about the descent of the soul into the human a body which occurs with illumination (for example in *Enn.* IV.3.9–13). At her embodiment, the soul then receives her sense perception αἴσθησις.

2.7.3 The Process of Imaging in the Cosmos

Let us briefly turn back and review the creation process in the region of the Soul. As we recall, Nature-Soul was an image of the World Soul. The World Soul was a more powerful entity than Nature, who was endowed with ‘better reasons’ and who had contemplated the Ideas. Thus Nature was well anchored in the intelligible and thereby connected to the divine Intellect and to the One. This anchoring was established by the transmission of Ideas-Forms from the World Soul, as well as by Nature’s imaging of (participation in) the World Soul. The transmission occurred by mediation by the Λόγοι. Nature-Soul was able to produce the material world because of her unification with the causal Λόγοι σπερματικοί. The Λόγοι, as well as the Forms, were designated as εἶδωλα. When the Λόγοι projected form onto the matter, they caused things to manifest as visible εἶδωλα as well. Hence an εἶδωλον (λόγος, image) is an imitation⁵⁵ of the intelligible Form Εἶδος. The Λόγοι here are also called traces⁵⁶ of divine forms in the Intellect (which were transmitted to the Soul-Intellect).

In sum, at the level of Nature-Soul, we have various images: Λόγοι in matter are themselves images of the transcendent, eternal Ideas or Forms, of which the

53 II.3.17 and 18.

54 IV.7.2.22–25; II.7.3.1–12. Here Plotinus distinguishes between the terms εἶδος-the divine Idea and εἶδωλον-the form manifesting in matter.

55 μίμημα; V.9.3.35–37, III.6.6–19.

56 Trace ἔχνος and λόγος are expressed as equivalents in VI.7.37. (See note 20). Of interest is that the term trace is also used Augustine as ‘sign’: *signum* or *vestigium* to designate primarily the same thing: a reference to the divine. See *Trin.* VI.10.12, XI.5.5; Chapters 4.2.7 and 5.3.8.5.

transcendent, divine Λόγος is the collaborator. The Λόγοι will cause the sense world to become a reflection of the intelligible world. Accordingly, matter or physical bodies which contain these Λόγοι are also referred to as images, εἰδωλα. They appear before the physical senses and also become mental images φαντασμά. A point to underscore here is that individual souls are also designated as λόγοι. These are images of the transcendent Λόγος (the World Soul or Λόγος), yet stated more specifically, the human soul ψυχή is an image of the All-Soul Ψυχή. (This important theme will be main subject of section 3.) Hence, the whole world is an image of Nature-Soul and Λόγοι (*Enn.* 11.3.18) (which are in turn, images of the World-Soul and the Universal Λόγος). All visible things in the material universe are εἰδωλα, thus also images of the archetypal Ideas-Forms in the Divine Intellect (VI.2.22.33–end). The human soul, by actualizing her intellect, is connected to the divine Intellect and the Ideas in a special way. Altogether, Plotinus' process of imaging is closely allied to the Ideas-Forms and is effectuated by the Λόγος which is the form giving principle. The Λόγος itself is a creative expression (arising from contemplation) which structures the world by its activity of forming matter, the crux of the imaging process. The Λόγος itself is also an active structuring force in the human mind, as we will see in section 3.

This exposition has not exhausted Plotinus' use of images, because imaging permeates his entire philosophy. A few more examples which were not discussed here are: that science is an εἰκὼν of perfect knowledge (V.3.4); time an image of eternity (III.7.1.17–20), sense perception is an image of discursive thinking or of contemplation (I.1.7). In sum, in Plotinus' philosophy, all things, beings, physical or divine manifestations share a common origin: the One. All things and beings ultimately image the One even if it is in some remote way.

2.7.4 Properties of Images

In Plotinus' cosmology, imaging takes place on all levels of existence in a hierarchical fashion. An image in Plotinus' philosophy is an inferior copy of its model or its direct source (V.9.5). It bears a resemblance to its source, but also a dissemblance, which is due to its inferior manifestation of being. The infinite multiplicity of images in the visible world is in stark contrast to the unity of the Ideas as well as the compact unity contained in the divine Intellect; the contrast is even greater in light of the most perfect, absolute unity of the One.

Through the process of imaging by the mediation of the Λόγος, everything is related to everything else in some way. As such everything participates⁵⁷ in

57 E.g., VI.5.8; also: I.6 2.13–14: 'We maintain that the things in this world are beautiful by participating in form.' See note 71 for the differentiations in meaning of 'participation'.

some way in the Being which exists above it. The Λόγος is the connecting thread between all levels of existence. There is always a trace of something higher in everything; matter contains traces of the divine as well. Because there is an invisible form principle λόγος in all material things, all these things contain light and beauty from the transcendent Forms above. In this sense, all existing things are 'living thoughts'.⁵⁸ In the process of imaging on all levels of reality, and in particular, the level of the human soul as image of God striving to return to its source, Plotinus underscores the total dependence of all things on the divine.⁵⁹

There is a difference between the imaging occurring in the divine realm of Hypostases and that of the lower material images. From the Νοῦς downwards, imaging is progressively weakened as participation in true Being decreases. There is an ontological demarcation line which lies somewhere at the lower level of Nature-Soul at the transition between intelligible and visible matter. But as we shall see below, this demarcation line seems less discernable in Plotinus' depiction of the relationship between the human and the divine Intellect. In any case, in the world of matter, the participation and degree of resemblance diminishes considerably. Visible matter and the world of sense perception make up the lowest form of existence: they are temporal, mutable and transient. Traces or images of the divine contained in visible things are not divine themselves, they are mere indicators of the upper immaterial regions, their causes. As such, the transcendent Forms εἶδη are not in themselves truly immanent in matter but are represented by their εἰδωλα that participate in them in some way. Plotinus says of the material things: 'The forming principle (Λόγος) then, which operates in the visible shape, is the last, and is dead and is no longer able to make another ...' (III.8.2.30–35). These εἰδωλα are regarded as phantoms or ghosts (III.6.6–7) 'It is a ghostly image of bulk εἶδωλον καὶ φάντασμα ... It (LZ: matter) always presents opposite appearances on its surface, small and great, less and more, deficient and superabundant, a phantom which does not remain and cannot get away either, for it has no strength for this, since it has not received strength from intellect, but is lacking in all being.' (III.6.7.13, 17–21). These statements reveal something significant about Plotinus' epistemology and the kinds of knowledge he differentiates, which will be discussed in section 3. In Plotinus' view, knowledge of material εἰδωλα contrasts distinctly with the knowledge based upon their εἶδη.

58 VI.7.12.23–30. See A.H. Armstrong, 'The Divine Enhancement of Earthly Beauties: The Hellenistic and Platonic Tradition', *Eranos* 53 (1984) 49–81, 68–75.

59 E.g., V.8.3.17, 10.23–26, 11 and 12. V.9.2.21–23, etc.

The transmission of Ideas or Forms from the transcendent regions to Nature-Soul is also accompanied by a transmission of intelligible divine Light which originates from the divine Intellect and ultimately from the One. [Recall here Augustine's praise of Plotinus for his conception of the immaterial God of pure light (from Chapter 2.2; *Civ. Dei* X.2)] Thus the images manifesting in the material realm (which should include as well the human soul) possess a progressively diminished degree of light from the One due to their lower rank in the hierarchy of all things.

An aspect of importance which is involved in illumination from the intelligible region and in the imaging process is the act of contemplation. The offspring produced when the second and third Hypostases came into existence (as images of their models or *Λόγοι*) were a direct result of this. Contemplation was primarily an activity of the Intellect and always entailed turning inward and reflecting on oneself, while meditating on that which is higher than itself. The chain of contemplation in the hypostatic realm was as follows: the *Νοῦς* contemplated the One and itself—the Intelligible World; the *Νοῦς*-Soul contemplated the hypostasis *Νοῦς* (the Ideas), the World Soul contemplated the Ideas in *Νοῦς*-Soul.⁶⁰ Plotinus wrote that Nature produced without having contemplated.⁶¹ Hence, the further one descends in the hierarchy, the more contemplative power diminishes. This was especially evident in Nature-Soul; for this reason her offspring are less potent to produce anything themselves. The contemplative power in matter, for instance, is nihil.

This was even more evident in the human soul. She is intensely occupied with—thus distracted by—the myriad of changing material images surrounding her. Consequently she is less concerned with that which is above her. As a result, humans tend to forget their source entirely or even how to contemplate.⁶² Thus the soul must re-learn contemplation. She is stimulated in this development by love and beauty in their earthly manifestations (*Enn.* I.3.1.29–end,–I.3.3). Contemplation and participation are intricately related.

As we will see in the upcoming section, the human soul possesses an inherent inclination and desire to become one with its source. It can become an

60 The contemplation of the Ideas by the Hypostasis Soul serves as a paradigm for the human soul. This is her ultimate goal which results from longing for knowledge (III.8.7–8.) The lower levels of the All-Soul contemplate the higher levels. In this sense, the Soul contemplates itself. See section 4 on the Ascent.

61 Nature-Soul contemplates poorly (III.8.4.4) or just dreams (VI.5.12).

62 Intelligible matter possesses Form, thus contains Being and for this reason it is capable of turning upwards. Visual matter cannot turn upwards because it has contains practically no being (II.4.5.33).

image of the Godhead by actualizing her intellect. This consists of contemplating the divine Intellect or the Ideas which effectuates an ascent, as well as the image imitating its model. ‘... all things aspire to contemplation.’ (111.8.1.1–2). It is now useful to bring this lengthy exposition on Plotinus’ cosmogony more into perspective with the goals of this study.

2.8 *A Short Prelude on Augustine’s Doctrine of Creation and Imaging*

In Augustine’s doctrine of creation, treated in Chapter 4.2, we will see a great number of similarities to what we have just seen in Plotinus’ cosmology and especially his system of imaging. His exegesis of the creation story in Genesis—in which he describes the origin of the soul and how the soul is an image of God—provides us with strong examples of correspondence: for example, his conception of the two phases of creation in which a similar ontological demarcation line of two realities is present: between the divine and the material world, the latter of which is perceived by the physical senses. Especially the creation of soul and body are treated in a parallel manner as in Plotinus’ cosmology: each separately: the soul being created before the body. Turning to contemplate God and divine illumination are important elements in Augustine’s doctrine of creation as well.

The question might arise as to why Plotinus’ cosmology and especially his doctrine of the Λόγος has been delineated in such detail in the preceding subsections. Here it was confirmed that Plotinus’ notion of Λόγος was responsible for instigating the imaging process. In the upcoming chapter we will see that Augustine borrowed not only Plotinus’ theory of Ideas for his doctrine of creation, but, likewise, his system of λόγοι. He used them to formulate his own doctrine of the rational principles *Rationes*, as the creation principles of the world. In this regard, Augustine made few changes to Plotinus’ view and integrated these principles neatly into his Christian interpretation of Genesis.⁶³ In adapting Plotinus’ system of Ideas and Λόγος-λόγοι, Augustine simplified these notions to some extent, yet included them in his exegesis in such a way as if these notions were self-explanatory, hence puzzling the modern reader.

In the section above, we saw how Plotinus’ notion of Λόγος was intricately allied with the intelligible world. This was also true for Augustine’s *Rationes*: he made it clear that the terms *ratio* and ἰδέα were essentially synonymous and

63 P. Agaësse and A. Solignac’s article is instructive in demonstrating how the notion of Λόγος in Plotinus is employed in Augustine’s doctrine of *Rationes*, concepts which directly involve the image of God. ‘Le Logos et les Logoi chez Plotin’, *BA* 48, 654–657, which is elaborated even further in: Zwollo, ‘Plotinus’ Λόγος’.

accordingly, he translated the Greek term λόγος into Latin as *ratio*.⁶⁴ Just as Plotinus' Ideas and Λόγος were situated in the universal Intellect, Augustine situated the eternal *Rationes* in the mind of the second divine Trinitarian person, the Word of God or the Creator. However he designated the Word of God or Christ, not with the term *Ratio* (in translating St. John's term Λόγος θεοῦ), but with *Verbum Dei*.⁶⁵

Augustine's interest in Plotinus' philosophy was, to say the least, not limited to the notions of Ideas and λόγοι. As we will see in the upcoming sections, the Λόγος and λόγοι also played a significant role in Plotinus' doctrine of intellect, his epistemology and how the soul became an image of the divine by means of an ascent. In the upcoming chapters on Augustine's *imago Dei* and *Trinitatis*, we will see how Augustine uses the term *ratio* as well to designate the individual soul and how he borrowed elements of Plotinus philosophy to describe his own (Christian) interpretation of the elevation of the human image (the soul/intellect) to God. Significant differences in Augustine are to be expected here (especially how he explicitly attributed to the human intellect—the image of God—to the world of time and space and not to the divine.) Yet striking similarities are present as well.

The complexity and lucidity of Plotinus' carefully thought out system of imaging as well as his doctrine of the Ideas and Λόγος, were obviously convincing to Augustine. Indeed, Plotinus' depiction of imaging provides a fascinating and thought provoking view of the cosmos. It demonstrates his appreciation for the beauty and good in the world around us, which was derived directly from the divine Good, the first and highest Hypostasis.

3 The Human Soul as Image: φύσις, Λόγος and Νοῦς⁶⁶

3.1 Introduction

The unification of the World Soul with the Universal Λόγος, as relayed in the theogony from the previous section, was the starting point for the making of

64 *Div. qu.* 46, *De Ideis*.

65 *Ibidem*, essay no. 63, *De Verbo*.

66 In the Greek text there are no capital letters; the modern reader must differentiate between the divine entities Νοῦς, Ψυχή and Λόγος and their worldly counterparts in their contexts in Plotinus' psychology. The human variants are indicated here with low case. Fortunately, Armstrong's English translation also makes this differentiation. Sometimes Plotinus assists the reader by referring to the human soul as 'our soul' or 'us'. Yet there are still passages where the difference between divinities and humans remain unclear. This difficulty is aggravated when researchers fail to make the distinction as well.

human beings. The World Soul divided herself into individual souls, which not only became conjoined with the individual intellects but subsequently became λόγοι.⁶⁷ As such, Plotinus designated the individual ψυχή in general as an individual λόγος (IV.3.5.10–end, IV.3.8.17–20) which was in effect a collaborative ‘expression’ of the World Soul and Universal Λόγος. Plotinus also suggested a strong and direct contact between the human λόγος and the World Soul-Λόγος, as well as the All-Soul (IV.9, IV.3). Thus he justified that the human soul was of divine and transcendent origin. The divine Λόγος transmitted the λόγοι-souls and the λόγοι containing the forms further to the lowest realm, to matter, in order to impregnate matter with form. This included the formation of human bodies. In this way, the transcendent Λόγος saw to it that the human being became a composite of body and soul, and that the human ψυχή would become an image of all three levels of the All-Soul Ψυχή. There are several manifestations of Λόγοι at work here which in effect operate in two directions: one is the creative, form-giving Λόγοι which joins things together (a downward movement) and another which joins things and souls to entities on the higher, transcendent levels (an upward activity).

3.2 *The Lower Soul φύσις*

The formation processes described above in which the soul joined a body and effectuated the creation of a human person now require more nuances. Plotinus differentiated between the images λόγοι in the visible world—which include the human body—and the λόγος, the human soul; they are intricately interwoven yet subtly distinct.⁶⁸ There is a differentiation between soul and body⁶⁹ in that the origin of the human soul is divine and the body, being of matter, pertains to the realm of material things which are perceived with physical senses (*Enn.* I.1; III.8.1–3). Things of matter are bound to the dimensions of

67 W. Helleman-Elgersma relates the views of various authors (only up until 1980) on the problem of the articulation of the relationship between the individual soul and the World Soul: ‘Souls Sisters—A Commentary on the *Enneads* (IV.3 (27) 1–8) of Plotinus’ (Dissertation, VU University, Amsterdam, 1980) 89–102 on the origin of the soul.

68 Fattal, *Image, logos, mythe*, 45–note 37; 51–note 42; *Enn.* IV.8.7; See Pigler, *Plotin, l’amour*, 145–198; Rist, *Road to Reality*, 85–95. Rist points out individual souls are considered by Plotinus to be ‘fallen’, in contrast to the World Soul, which remains in the transcendent realm (*ibidem*, 122).

69 On the different parts of the soul, e.g., IV.8.8 and the descent of the soul into bodies. Not treated here is Plotinus’ description of how the soul produces her own physical body, which is only mentioned briefly or sporadically in the *Enn.* A more complicated subject which this study likewise does not explore is Plotinus’ depiction of the relationship between the human soul and her physical body. There is much literature on the latter subject.

time and space, are transient, mutable and contain λόγοι. The λόγοι σπερματικοί in matter (the ‘reason’ or ‘seed’ principles) incorporate natural production power. They may contain the latent powers of development but cannot be considered thoughts or knowledge. They do contain a certain intelligence, but this is not the same intelligence which, for instance, the higher level of the human soul possesses.⁷⁰ A physical body is capable of reproduction and growth as a result of being conjoined with the soul, its life principle. The body is connected to the lowest part of the soul, ‘nature’ (IV.3.12–13).

There are several important points to underline here: the first is that the body may be intricately connected to the soul-nature, yet there is another part of the soul which is completely incorporeal: the rational soul, which will concern us in the next subsection of this exposition. Secondly, the differentiations between the λόγοι—in matter, the human body and the soul—can be further substantiated in the following way: an εἶδωλον is the material image; it is a particular manifestation of the intelligible Form εἶδος. It is essentially the shape or form of something material which renders it recognizable to human eyes. There exists indeed a participation between the transcendent εἶδος and material εἶδωλα. Yet for Plotinus, this does not constitute the most significant participation, because matter is not capable of contemplation and therefore is deprived of the kind of participation which is inherently potential in the higher soul.⁷¹ This is also because these material images, the εἶδωλα are ‘phantoms’ φαντασίαι,⁷² non-being or mere appearances of Being.⁷³ The inner form εἶδωλον

70 Fattal, *Image, mythe, logos*, 45–notes 37–51. Λόγοι σπερματικοί in the sense of images of the forms in the physical body are to be understood as ‘acts of the Soul’ in the bodies of animals and living beings: *ibidem*, 49–note 40 and *Enn.* IV.3.10, 11–12. See also Fattal, *Logos, image*, 26–44.

71 Plotinus describes the relationship between the material object as image to its Idea with the term participation. This indicates that the object owes its existence to the Form which it images. Because matter has no consciousness, there is obviously no conscious desire to know its source. The participation with the material object, as image of an intelligible Idea, simply exists (e.g., *Enn.* I.6.2). Because the human soul has awareness, it is capable of mentally conceiving its resemblance as well as dissemblance to the Godhead. A true participation would infer a full participation which is consummated by unification of the image with the deity it images; as a dynamic, conscious contact or communication between the intelligible world and the human intellect (which is an image of divine Intellect). The human intellect participates in the divine Intellect by contemplating its Ideas and enjoying unification with the Intellect. See e.g., *Enn.* I.6.6, and VI.5.7.1–5.

72 See Fattal, *Image, logos, mythe*, note 28 for a further explanation. In comparison, Augustine’s term for images as product of the imagination are *phantasmata*. Augustine’s term *phantasiae* consists essentially of recollection of images stored in the memory. Augustine’s articulations of ‘image’ have the same significance as those Plotinus.

73 E.g., III.6.7.27–30. For an explanation of this see Fattal, *Image, logos, mythe*, 53.

of a material or physical object, as well as the λόγος σπερματικός (the terms are essentially synonymous here), are invisible to the human eye. Sense perception by itself is unable to perceive them or the transcendent, archetypal Forms in the things it sees, due to its limitations of contemplative power. This lends the εἶδωλον and the forming principles their status of epistemological phantoms.⁷⁴ This three-sided phenomenon: the form in matter, matter itself and sense perception—the latter of which in Plotinus' view is wholly corporeal—pertains to the reality of the lower soul, which is thus in itself disabled as far as understanding the truth of our existence is concerned.⁷⁵ The perception of true reality in the εἶδη can only take place in the higher soul, on the condition that the soul actualizes her intellect. We will now depart from Plotinus' conception of the physical part of the human soul and proceed further with his doctrine of the higher regions of the soul.

3.3 *The Rational Soul Λογιστικόν: Λόγος and Νοῦς*

Sometimes Plotinus refers to the human soul as εἶδωλον of a divine archetype εἶδος (*Enn.* v.9.13.5–end).⁷⁶ Yet the real potential of the human soul lies in the fact that it is an image of the deity, the All-Soul, who in turn is an image of Intellect (v.1.2–3). The human soul reflects its source in the sense that it like-

74 I.e., VI.2.20.1–16, etc. Emilsson on discursive thought, *Intellect*, 176–213; also *Enn.* III.8.2.30–35, III.6.19.28: that matter and the sense world are sterile.

75 '... the forming principle ... which operates in the visible shape is the last and is dead.' *Enn.* III.8.2.30–35. Also III.6.7.13–14, etc.

76 Does an Idea exist for each human individual? This question has relevance for determining the relationship between the divine Νοῦς and the human νοῦς. This issue has been addressed by e.g., H.J. Blumenthal, 'Did Plotinus believe in Ideas of Individuals?', *Phronesis* 11 (1966) 61–80; J. Rist, 'Forms of Individuals in Plotinus', *Classical Quarterly* 13 (1963) 223–231; *ibidem*, 'Ideas of Individuals in Plotinus, a reply to Dr. Blumenthal', in: *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 24, no. 92 (1970) 298–303; A.H. Armstrong, 'Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus', *Dionysius* 1 (1977) 49–68; P. Kalligas, 'Forms of Individuals in Plotinus: A Re-Examination', *Phronesis* 42, 1997, 206–227; C. Tornau, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un individu? Unité, individualité et conscience de soi dans la métaphysique plotinienne de l'âme', *Les études philosophiques. Plotin et son platonisme*, 2009, 333–360; P. Remes, *Plotinus on Self: The Philosophy of the We* (Cambridge, 2007) 76–85 and Emilsson, *Intellect*, 207.

If Plotinus posits that for each individual intellect there should be a corresponding Idea, then it would follow that every soul would be an image of an Idea. In my view, such a position is unsustainable for the following reasons: Plotinus designates the human intellect as an image of the divine Intellect; as such, the human νοῦς imitates the divine Νοῦς especially in its turning to contemplate the One. This turning ἐπιστροφή is not accomplished by the Ideas, but of the whole entity, Intellect. Furthermore the human intellect imitates the divine Intellect's contemplation of its own Ideas. This contemplation constitutes self-knowledge. See section four for further delineation on this subject.

wise consists of three regions: the highest, the intellect (νοῦς), a reasoning capacity (λόγος) and nature, conjoined with the physical body (φύσις). Plotinus designated the lower soul φύσις as image of the higher soul-λόγος; which is in turn an image of its νοῦς. The two highest regions of the soul (λόγος and νοῦς) are labelled by Plotinus as the 'rational soul',⁷⁷ λογιστικόν, whose primary engagement is thinking and contemplation. The λογιστικόν is the seat of self-consciousness;⁷⁸ its activities are immaterial.⁷⁹ (Recall that Augustine praised Platonism for their conception of the incorporeal mind and thinking as an immaterial activity in *Civ. Dei* VIII.6.) Plotinus described two modes of thinking of the rational soul which pertain respectively to the λόγος and the νοῦς: διάνοια and νόησις/θεωρία.⁸⁰

The individual λόγος possesses the capacity to reason λογισμός, to think discursively διάνοια and in short, to come to an understanding of things by logical reasoning, analysis and synthesis. Διάνοια is a function which forms knowledge

77 M. Stróżyński rightly points out that the term 'rational' here does not necessarily connote thinking discursively but rather having a structure which is in accord with reason. On the same vein, God is transrational but this does not mean that for Plotinus God is not rational. *Mystical Experience and Philosophical Discourse in Plotinus* (Póznán, 2008) 202-note 67.

78 The term 'consciousness' is a modern term; yet it is not only used throughout Armstrong's translation but in this study as well. For an overview of contemporary philosophical discussions concerning the application of the modern conception of 'consciousness' to ancient concepts, see 'Introduction', in: S. Heinämaa, V. Lähteenmäki, P. Remes (eds.) *Consciousness: From Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 2007) 1–10. The term 'consciousness' used here corresponds to the general, conventional definition as indicated in *The Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*, 1981: Conscious—'aware, knowing; with mental faculties awake or active; self-conscious (of actions etc.) realized by the actor.' Consciousness—'state of being conscious: totality of a person's thought and feelings or a class of these; perception (of, that).' See also Chapter 5.3.7: 'Excursus on Love and Knowledge in Modern and Ancient Terminology'.

79 *Enn.* V.1.10: Plotinus mentions here that Plato speaks of this part of the soul as 'the inner man' (*Republic* IX 587A7). The inner man is mentioned again in *Enn.* I.1.10.15.

80 E.g., I.1, I.2.3; V.1.3, V.5.1–2; Much study has been done on Plotinus' two modes of thinking and perception as well as their capacity for knowledge acquisition. e.g., Emilsson, *Intellect*, 177–213; Pigler, *Plotin, l'amour*, 161–173; and Remes, *Plotinus on Self*. Chapter 3 in Remes' book examines two modes of the rational soul corresponding to two selves. She provides an elaborate discussion on these two modes and their interdependence and differentiation (125–178). Emilsson points out that λογισμός, inferential thought or reasoning and discursive thought διάνοια, entail successive reasoning and are temporal; in contrast to the διάνοια or 'reasoning' of the World Soul (183–186). M. Atkinson analyses Plotinus' use of the terms (διάνοια, λογιστικόν), questioning whether these are alternative ways for Plotinus to refer to intellect (as in *Enn.* V.1.10.14), arguing against Chaignet and Schweizer (and apparently with Blumenthal, *Psychology*, 100). Atkinson correctly concludes that διάνοια is not intellect, but rather an image of intellect. M. Atkinson, *Plotinus Enneads*, 60–63.

derived from visual images from the external world of εἰδωλα which enter the soul through sense perception (αἴσθησις) as representations of physical images (φαντασίαι or τύποι). They are then stored in the memory (μνήμη).⁸¹ The recovery of these images committed to memory has to do with an imaging-making faculty (φαντασία, φανταστικόν, φαντάζεσθαι) (*Enn.* IV.4.3) or the imagination of the rational soul. The rational soul has the responsibility of ordering and structuring the mind which includes organizing the mind's connection to the outer world or directing it to the inner, higher world within itself. This is parallel to the structuring and ordering activities of the divine Λόγος in the production process of the universe. The human λόγος governs its material realm by bringing these 'types' or mental images before the νοῦς in an act of judgment (κρίνειν) which essentially completes the movement of sense-perception. The latter is not a passive imprinting or 'stamping' of a sensible image upon a receptive soul; rather, it is an action of the memory, indicative of the soul's natural, productive power (IV.6.3.55–60). This means that the power of sense perception of material appearances is indistinguishable from memory μνήμη. The lower rational soul λόγος recollects thanks to certain innate Ideas which it inherently knows and by which it is able to perceive what it perceives.⁸² Additionally, the knowl-

81 Some comments on Plotinus' conception of memory: Plotinus treats memory in two texts: IV.6 and IV.3.25–IV.4.5. Memory and imagination are closely associated here. Plotinus generally regards sense perception or memory as delusory; therefore the designation of delusion includes, accordingly, the imaginary images as well. (Augustine usually regards the imagined images (Latin:) *phantasmata* in a negative light as well.) For Plotinus, memory does not occur in intellect because Intellect is an eternal realm and possesses no thinking back to the past in the dimension of time. Divine Intellect thinks itself eternally and is one with itself as object; this is not memory or recollection ἀνάμνησις. Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* does include memory as a function of the intellect, e.g., *Trin.* x, as in remembering God. Plotinus deals with this as well (see note below). This general summary on memory is based upon E. Moore's: 'Plotinus' and 'b. Sense perception and Memory', in: *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, A Peer-reviewed Academic Resource*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/plotinus/>, April 2014.

Augustine refutes Plato's theory of recollection in *Trin.* XII.15.24. Although Plotinus' conception of memory was likely influential on Augustine, this (as well as the theory of recollection) will only receive limited treatment in this study.

82 In the passage referred to in the note above in *Enn.* IV.6, the soul recalls her experience in Intellect (Heaven—which does not exist in the dimension of time) contemplating and being one with the intelligibles. Recollection ἀνάμνησις in the context of contemplation of Ideas is intellection and a recollection of experiencing heaven between reincarnations. (See Plotinus on reincarnation, *Enn.* III.4.2 and IV.3.9.) The human intellect sees or recollects the true Ideas and while doing so, forgets the images of sense perception as they are of a false nature. Yet the former is retained. Plotinus explains two kinds of memory in the context of the soul descending after a visit to the intelligible realm, as illustrated in the following passage:

edge it accumulates, based upon the εἶδωλα, is obtained by an inferential grasp of its object. Its representational and propositional knowledge is only piecemeal and is characterized by its temporality.

3.4 Two Kinds of Knowledge

As such, we see here that the reasons in the human soul λόγοι σπερματικοί (unlike the λόγοι in matter which have a formative function) have a gnosteological function and are integral to discursive thought. The lower rational soul is activated by knowledge obtained by sense perception but essentially seeks the understanding of the divine Ideas. The λόγοι in the rational soul will lead the soul up to higher regions of itself, although its perception of them, at the level of the soul-λόγος is incomplete. (This will be explained in more detail in the following section 4 on the ascent, regarding the contemplation of the Ideas.)

The soul-λόγος is hence the joining point between scientific knowledge and true knowledge, ἐπιστήμη or γνῶσις; true knowledge is equated with σοφία or wisdom. E. Moore⁸³ seems to suggest that Plotinus designated true knowledge with the term γνῶσις ἀληθής.⁸⁴ Yet this claim would be misleading, as it tends to associate Plotinus with the γνῶσις of the Gnostics of his age, which he explicitly refuted (*Enn.* 11.9: *Against the Gnostics*). Moreover, Plotinus utilizes these two general terms γνῶσις and ἐπιστήμη interchangeably for both worldly and true universal knowledge.⁸⁵ Augustine, on the other hand, uses two different

'But if it (LZ: the soul) comes out of the intelligible world and cannot endure unity, but embraces its own individuality and wants to be different and so to speak puts its head outside, it thereupon acquires memory. Its memory of what is in the intelligible world still holds it back from falling, but its memory of the things here below carries it down here; its memory of what is in heaven keeps it there and in general it is and becomes what it remembers. For remembering is either thinking or imagined (τὸ μνημονεύειν ἢ νοεῖν ἢ φαντάζεσθαι); and the image (φαντασία) comes to the soul not by possession, but as it sees, so it is disposed; and if it sees sense-objects, it sinks low in proportion to the amount of them it sees. For because it (LZ: the soul) possesses all things in a secondary way, and not so perfectly [as Intellect], it becomes all things, and since it is a thing belonging to the frontier between the worlds, (LZ: the sensible and the noetic or divine worlds) and occupies a corresponding position, it moves in both directions.' (IV.4.3)

See also Plotinus' notion of memory in: Remes, *Self*, 111–119; R.A.H. King, *Aristotle and Plotinus on Memory* (Berlin, NY, 2009) on Plotinus: 106–217.

83 Moore: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/plotinus/#H3>. See note 81.

84 'For, again, since knowledge (τῆς γνώσεως) of other things comes to us from intellect, and we are able to know (γινώσκειν) intellect by intellect, by what sort of simple intuition could one grasp this which transcends the nature of intellect?' 111.8.9.19–20. (See also e.g., I.4.10.16; I.8.1.10); A review of the different usages of the term *gnōsis* provided by *Lexicon Plotinianum*, 217–218 demonstrates the diversity of meanings of γνῶσις in Plotinus.

85 Rist points out that Plotinus uses the term γνῶσις more frequently than ἐπιστήμη (Rist,

terms for two different kinds of knowledge: *scientia* and *sapientia*: respectively, worldly and true knowledge-wisdom.⁸⁶

Plotinus depicts the acquisition of true knowledge in a number of ways. When the human intellect is oriented to its source, the Νοῦς, it is illuminated directly, enabling the contemplation of the Ideas (νόησις). This part of the human soul has the capacity of a fuller understanding of the Ideas;⁸⁷ its acquisition of knowledge is non-inferential, intuitive and immediate. Its grasping of truth is also non-representational, non-temporal and infallible as well.⁸⁸ The contemplation of Ideas can also be achieved through discursive thought, however, the difference is that this manner of contemplation entails an understanding in separate fractions, as in how one understands scientific theories and related concepts, but not the entirety of all science. The knowledge obtained by the λόγος-soul is derived from the elaboration of sense data εἰδωλα and is generally deemed as opinion δόξα. On the other hand, knowledge obtained by the intellect is derived from the contemplation of the true Forms (εἰδη) themselves, which constitute true reality and wisdom. The individual human intellect νοῦς imitates the Universal Νοῦς in that it contemplates itself, as well as that which is higher than itself. It also resembles the Νοῦς in that it is exclusively involved with the intelligible realm and never passes outside of it. Plotinus goes so far as to say that the human νοῦς does not really belong to the rest of the soul (v.3.23–27). In that sense, it does not truly pertain to the individual ‘I’ but to ‘we’.⁸⁹ Further resemblances and differentiation between the human intellect and the divine Intellect will be elaborated in the section 4 on the ascent and on the contemplation of the Ideas.

Parallel to the various εἰδωλα, the levels of the soul and different kinds of knowledge, are Plotinus’ various distinctions of ‘the self’.⁹⁰ O’Daly suggests that

Eros, Psyche, 168). R. Ferwerda, *Plotinus Enneaden, Porphyrius Over Het Leven van Plotinus*, vertaald uit het Grieks en ingeleid door R. Ferwerda (Budel, Netherlands, 2005) 98.

86 *Trin.* XII–XIII. See Chapter 5.3.8.6 on Augustine’s epistemology: ‘Lower and Higher Knowledge: Interior Man (books XII and XIII)’.

87 E.g., v.3.5.44: here the triad νοῦς–νόησις–νοητόν is utilized to illustrate this.

88 Remes, *Self*, 129.

89 II.9.2, IV.3.12, IV.8.8, v.1.10–12; See S. Rappe, *Reading Neo-Platonism* (Cambridge, 2000) xiii. See section 4.4.2 of this chapter and also Chapter 9.6.3.

90 E.g., I.1, I.1.4.24; VI.7.4.7; IV.3. and 4; G.J.P. O’Daly, *Plotinus Philosophy of the Self* (Shannon, 1973) 1–12, 20–26. Other literature on Plotinus’ conception of the self: R. Mortley, *Plotinus, Self and the World* (Cambridge, 2014); P. Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard* (Paris, 1997, 2010) 25–44; S. Rappe, ‘Self-knowledge and subjectivity in the *Enneads*’, *CCP* (1996) 250–274; R. Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life and Death* (Oxford, 2006); P. Remes, *Self*. Remes expresses her hope that her ‘book will help in placing Plotinus on the map of development of the Western notion of the self. He was still

these distinctions roughly correspond to the type of knowledge they produce: a physical self *φυσικόν* which with its sense perception pertains to the lowest *εἰδωλα* or to soul-nature. The inner or 'rational self' *λογιστικόν* is a combination of the soul *λόγος* and *νοῦς*; the 'historical self' would then be a combination of the *φυσικόν* with its discursive thinking: soul-*λόγος* *διανοητικόν*. Then there is the highest self (*νοῦς*) which is the true or ideal self, corresponding to *νόησις* or contemplation, related to knowledge derived from the *εἶδη*.⁹¹ Plotinus does not always make these distinctions entirely clear. Yet generally speaking, Plotinus' conception of 'selfhood' encompasses a gradual process of development towards an ideal end. A similar process is also present in Augustine's anthropology.⁹² Let us now return to the issue of the divinity of the soul which was brought up in Chapter 2.3.

3.5 *The Divinity of the Human Intellect (1)*

Throughout the *Enneads*, Plotinus states that the human soul is divine or that it is strongly connected to the World Soul. For example: 'Our soul then is a divine thing and of a nature different [from the things of sense], like the universal nature of soul; and the human soul is perfect when it has intellect;' (V.1.10.14). These kind of passages in the *Enneads* are confusing, because as we saw in Plotinus' cosmology, divinity is exclusively pure immaterial, transcendent and eternal. Certainly the human soul, as image of the tripartite All-Soul, has a higher ontological status than matter and the body as well as a certain independence from them. Plotinus also says that the human soul is a whole—a unity, comparable to the unity in the All-Soul (IV.7.10). We have also just seen how the lower soul is connected to the human body and discursive thinking to the *Λόγος*-soul. Although incorporeal in its nature and activity, the soul-*λόγος* nonetheless directly processes sense impressions of material and temporal nature and is in this way naturally connected to the physical realm.

missing from Charles Taylor's *The Source of Self* (1989) ... and although there are studies such as P. Cary's *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*, 2000 that duly acknowledge Plotinus' influence on Augustine and through him to later thinkers, these kind of studies do not explicate Plotinus' thinking in its own right but as a prelude to Augustine.' (19); I am in complete agreement with this last statement. Because of the complexity of the topic of 'the self' in Plotinus and Augustine, the present study is unable to give it the attention it merits.

91 *Enn.* V.3.1; III.9.3, III.9.6, 7–end, etc.

92 *Remes, Self*, 3; in antiquity, an established topic such as 'the philosophy of the self' did not exist; there were no works entitled *On Self and Person* (*ibidem*, 4). Plotinus' terminology includes the recurring use of the reflexive pronoun *ἑαυτὸν* (oneself) and the third person pronoun *αὐτός* which means 'he', but also emphatically 'himself' (*ibidem*, 9).

Taking this into consideration, several other questions arise here: what is the exact status of the human soul according to Plotinus in relation to its divine origin and its connection to divinity? This question already came up in the discussion of Augustine's criticism of the Platonism and his apparent omission of critique as it pertained to the Platonists. His critique of the divinity of the soul was solely addressed to Manichaeans. Yet he complimented the Platonists for their distinction between the Creator and creation (*Civ. Dei* VIII.6, x.2). Yet the quote above and the explicit assertion that the soul is divine (and this is but one of many such instances) suggest the opposite: the consubstantiality of the soul with the divine—and especially so once she actualizes her intellect.⁹³ Another question: if Plotinus claims that the highest part of the human soul, the intellect, is divine, how does he view the relationship between the lower human soul—which is attached to a body—and its intellect? The latter of which, Plotinus claims, just as the hypostasis Intellect, is completely immaterial and never departs from its own realm (*Enn.* v.1.3). How can the intellect which is closest to divinity 'cohabitate' with the embodied lower soul? And how can the soul be considered to possess a unity AND be divine if the intellect is completely immaterial and her two lower regions are not? To complicate the matter even more, Plotinus often speaks of the 'undescended intellect', which remains in the realm of the νοῦς (or Νοῦς?), in contrast to the situation of the 'descended soul' which is the consequence of the soul's 'fall' into the physical body '... even our soul does not altogether come down, but there is something of it in the intelligible.'⁹⁴

93 Examples in which Plotinus expresses the intellect as equal to the intelligible world: *Enn.* v.8.4-7, vi.7.12.22-30, iii.4.3.22, iv.7.10.34-36. Ironically, in his treatise *Against the Gnostics*, Plotinus reproaches this group of thinkers for identifying the human soul with the Divine Soul, as well as positing that the Soul is the demiurge, superior to the Intellect (ii.9.6).

94 iv.8.8.1-15 from the treatise *On the Descent of the Soul into Bodies*; see also v.1.11.1-3, v.3.3, etc. There is much literature on the fall of the soul in Plotinus. The questions raised in this chapter make up only a part of the entire problematic. (For instance, parallel to this problem is the lack of clarity between the Νοῦς and the Soul-Νοῦς.) It will not be helpful to give a full scale exposition on these extensive issues in this study. Every researcher of Plotinus seems to have his own view of what the discrepancies actually are, as well as what the relationship of these are to other aspects of Plotinus' doctrine. This study will furnish its own explanation from the point of view of Plotinus' teaching on imaging, as well as Augustine's understanding of Plotinus (see especially Chapter 7.3, and Chapters 9 and 10.).

On Plotinus' undescended intellect, see: P. Remes, *Neoplatonism* (Stockfield, 2008) 115-118; H.J. Blumenthal, 'On Soul and Intellect'; L. Gerson, *Ancient Epistemology* (Cambridge, 2009) 134-147. (Gerson does not treat Plotinus' claim of the undescended intellect *per se* as the problem itself. Instead he describes Plotinus' assimilation of Aristotle's Intellect and

Blumenthal⁹⁵ acknowledged the difficulties here against Armstrong (the translator of the *Enneads*), who denied that there were any serious inconsistencies in Plotinus' psychology.⁹⁶ Remes recognizes the discrepancies mentioned above in her comment on *Enn.* III.4.3.21–24—in which Plotinus declares 'we are the intelligible universe'. She comments: 'Because of Plotinus' understanding of human souls as divine, as having the unfallen part or being in direct contact with the intelligible, he is at pains to explain the fact that human souls are nonetheless embodied and live their lives in the realm of imperfection and evil.'⁹⁷ In order to reach a satisfying solution to these lacunas concerning the intellect and its alleged divinity, we will need to search elsewhere and explore other topics which are deeply rooted in Plotinus' psychology. His view on matter, evil and error 'in the realm of imperfection' will contribute to the clarification.

3.6 *Matter, Evil, Sin and Error*

For Plotinus there are two kinds of matter: intelligible matter⁹⁸ and physical, visible matter. Our concern for now is the latter. Visible matter for Plotinus is the most inferior of all forms of existence as it is the furthest away from the first

the fact that neither Plotinus nor Aristotle resolves the problem of how an individual has access to the divine intellect without becoming identical to it.) For further references, see the notes below.

95 H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology, His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* (The Hague, 1971) 1–7, *ibidem*, 'Soul and Intellect', 82–104, 83, 92; This problem in Plotinus is also recognized by Brachtendorf, especially concerning the finite and the infinite Intellect, *Struktur*, 27–32.; S.R.L. Clark, 'Plotinus: Body and Soul', *CCP*, 275–295, 282–288; M. Atkinson, *Plotinus Enneads*, 42, 62–64.

96 *Psychology*, 3, note 7; A.H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe, in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940) 26; *ibidem*, 'Studies in traditional anthropology II: Plotinus', *Downside Review* 66 (1948) 409. Armstrong explained that Plotinus' assimilation of irreconcilable doctrines from e.g., Aristotle, other Platonists or Neo-Pythagoreans, was likely the cause for these inconsistencies to which Blumenthal refers. Armstrong did acknowledge later that these problems were also dealt with and solved by later Neo-Platonists, such as in Iamblichus' *Mysteries*. 'St. Augustine and Christian Platonism' in: R.A. Markus (ed.) *Augustine, A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York, 1972) 5–37, 8. Gerson treats Plotinus' assimilation of Aristotle's *Noûs* (*Epistemology*, 137–147).

97 Remes, *Self*, 184.

98 'Intelligible matter' as contrasted with 'visible matter' was merely mentioned in note 49 on the creation of the visible world. Before visible matter could exist as itself, there must have been an intelligible prototype from which the world was made, which existed before the coming of existence of the visible world. Rist explains in the context of Plotinus' view of evil the difference between intelligible matter and matter as such: intelligible matter, once produced, has the power to turn back to its source (*Enn.* V.3.11; II.4.5) and receive its form from that source (*Road to Reality*, 124). The matter of the visible universe has no such

Hypostasis, the One or the Good. The first Hypostasis is not only our origin but our ultimate goal. In this perspective, matter stands at the very opposite end of the all-encompassing and unifying principle, permeated with ‘ghostly’ images of countless multiplicity. As furthest from the Good, it is, at least semantically speaking, ‘bad’. There are some passages in the *Enneads* which give the impression that Plotinus staunchly believes matter to be the epitome of badness.⁹⁹ Yet if matter is bad, then the same could be said of human life in the material world, or the human body.

Such a conclusion begs further explanation, because Plotinus does not always unambiguously view matter as being evil itself. Seen from the converse, all things which exist derive from the One, the Good; on account of their origin, all things, including matter and the human body are essentially of a good nature. Matter, bodies and even the entire cosmos, are images of eternal Beauty in the intelligible world—which is perfectly beautiful and good. Thus Plotinus views the world as essentially good and beautiful, because of its participation with the divine (*Enn.* I.6.2.13–14). Plotinus does recognize evil in the world and subsequently explores its cause. Its direct origin cannot be the divine world, because the Hypostases (as perpetrators of that Good) stand in close proximity to the One, the absolute Good. Physical matter contains substantially less Being than divine entities; it is in fact non-being. Because of this status, matter contains the potential for doing evil. Matter may possess darkness or emptiness, however it is not the ‘evil-doer’ itself. Evil is merely a shortage of good, the insensitivity to what is good¹⁰⁰ or even the absence of good (I.8.1). The young Augustine found this aspect of Plotinus’ philosophy most interesting as it helped him to distance himself from the Manichaean conception of battling forces of good and evil in the divine world. He described the Plotinian conception of evil as *privatio boni* in *Conf.* VII.12.18

Regarded from another perspective, matter originates in the region of Nature-Soul (v.2.2.30), the lowest region of the divine, transcendent Soul. Plotinus says that Nature-Soul has lost sight of her origins and because of this, she, together with matter, is also deemed as one of the potential causes of evil.¹⁰¹ The consequences of these statements are manifold. First of all, the inception

power whatsoever; it is dead and can only acquire the semblance of form by a completed act of Soul (III.9.3).

99 I.7.3.20; I.8.4.1–20. See Armstrong’s introductory remarks to the treatise III.6: *On Impassibility* (*Enneads* III, 206–207) on Plotinus’ negative remarks on matter. Also Rist, *Road to Reality*, 129.

100 II.4.16.16–24; I.8; III.6.11.44.

101 II.3.17.18–25; II.4.5.

of real evil is apparently to be found in the lower region of the human soul and as such, its manifestation is limited to the realms connected to or associated in some way with the material world. The highest region of the human soul, the intellect, on the other hand, is beyond error, sin and evil.¹⁰² It does not even experience painful affections of the soul (III.6.2–3). By virtue of this purity, it is distinguished from the lower region of the rational soul, the discursive reasoning faculty and its knowledge, which can indeed potentially err and sin because these are allied to the human body and the images in the material world (III.2). The images εἰδωλα in themselves are of a transient, changeable, thus potentially delusional nature.

When the soul is born into this world, she descends into a physical body and loses the recollection of her source.¹⁰³ Consequently, the soul begins to value and pursue things which are inferior to her heritage and true self. Nonetheless, the soul is potentially able to remember her origins again. This recollection ἀν-ἀμνησις is related to the human memory (see notes 81–82) and also plays a part in the contemplation of the intelligible world.¹⁰⁴ This contemplation entails

¹⁰² E.g., I.1.9.1, V.5.1.54–end. Why is the intellect beyond sin? Because the intellect is purified from all images of material things, εἰδωλα, the latter of which are phantoms and constitute an epistemological dead end (i.e., *Enn.* III.8.2.30–35, III.6.7.13–14). The knowledge produced from εἰδωλα is opinion and is conducive to illusion, vice and even stupidity. These occur only in the lower soul connected to the body. The purification of the soul occurs when seeing the Ideas in the Νοῦς (which includes Virtues). Further, Plotinus says that the intellect is always turned to the Good (V.5.12). In that sense, no evil or evil-doing is possible for it.

¹⁰³ Plotinus points to the soul itself (λόγος) as to where evil can originate, even in its pre-incarnational existence in the World Soul before it reaches the Soul-Nature: ‘Now the universal rational principle (i.e.: the World Soul-Λόγος) includes both good and evil things; evil things are parts of it too. It is not that the universal rational principle produces them but that it is the universal principle with them included. The rational principles are an activity of a universal soul and their parts of soul-parts; but as the one soul has differing parts, so correspondingly do the rational principles differ, with the result that the works also differ which are their ultimate products.’ (III.3.1.2–10). (The treatises III.2–3 are entitled *On Providence*. Here, the Λόγος is associated with divine Providence.) It is not likely that Plotinus believed that the Universal Λόγος-World Soul to be the causes of evil in the world. They are merely the origins of individual souls. These ψυχῇ-λόγοι were installed into a human body at the realm of Soul-Nature. Plotinus suggests here that the individual human souls-λόγοι already led lives of their own or were capable of good and evil while they existed in the realm of the World Soul-Λόγος; as if he intended to mean here in their pre-incarnational abode (or between incarnations), such as in ‘Heaven’ (e.g., IV.3.15.1).

¹⁰⁴ V.1; IV.4; In V.8.4, Plotinus describes a blissful existence which he designates as ‘Heaven’ οὐρανός in the realm of the Νοῦς which the soul experiences between incarnations. The soul inherently has knowledge of this realm through its pre-incarnational phase of existence which is forgotten at birth. At that time, she contemplated the intelligible world.

an ascent, moving away from the sense world of matter, to the interior of one's own mind, to higher regions where the origins of the world can be perceived.

It is important to keep in mind that Plotinus' philosophy establishes a hierarchy of realities: matter and physical bodies are at the lowest end of existence. In order to remember the origin of one's soul (and avoid evil), one must learn to temporarily put aside one's lower existence. In Plotinus' thinking, the material world is certainly not superfluous or even truly 'evil'.¹⁰⁵ Physical existence and the physical senses are necessary, for, among other things, gathering knowledge. Gathering knowledge based on material images is the inception of acquiring universal, true knowledge. Studying philosophy is a means of redemption or liberation from the world where evil exists.

The fact that people are sinning¹⁰⁶ and/or suffering¹⁰⁷ all the time could then be attributed to the fact, as Plotinus indicates, that humans neglect to unfold their full potential consciousness as νοῦς (V.1.12; III.2). Evil or vice is essentially founded upon illusory or wrong thinking. Sin entails mistaking phantoms φαντασμά, material or physical images εἰδωλά, for true reality, falling in love with them as it were and identifying oneself with them (IV.4). Therefore, humans who cannot contemplate well will be more prone to doing evil. Contemplation is a function of the rational soul: the seat of the power of judgment over the material images. Persons who can contemplate the Good or the Ideas—which Plotinus ascertains as true reality—will establish virtues in themselves and temper the passions of the lower soul. Acquiring virtues is a means of purifying the soul in order to see the Intellect and the Intelligible World. In order

105 Armstrong, 'Earthly Beauties', 75; *Enn.* III.2.13, 17–27; Porphyry tells in his *Life of Plotinus* 1.1 that Plotinus seemed ashamed of his own body, which seemed to have perpetuated the misunderstanding that Plotinus' philosophy was anti-world and anti-corporeal.

106 Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustine*, 74-note 121: 'Chez Plotin, on l'a vu, la notion de péché est totalement absente.' In this note, Fattal reiterates Plotinus' 'fall of the soul', the distance of the soul from the divine, its orientation to matter and also τόλμα, audacity—as if Plotinus did not intend to associate these with sinning or suffering. Fattal is explaining Plotinus in the context of Augustine's doctrine of sin, where there are in fact many differences. The differences in Augustine have to do with the notion of Christ who takes away the sins of the world, and Augustine's emphasis on confessing one's sins to Christ to purify the soul and to obtain forgiveness and salvation. Yet in my view, the difference between Augustine's and Plotinus' definition, as to what 'sin' actually entails, is essentially not so large as Fattal is making them out to be. (See Chapter 4.3.2.8.)

107 Suffering—as in experiencing affections, passions, negative emotions and pain. As a result of their egoism and longing for material gain, people (or more specifically souls-λόγοι) wage war with each other (III.2) which results in suffering and sin. Plotinus' term for sin is ἀμαρτία meaning also fault or failure. *Enn.* I.8: *On What Are Evils* analyzes matter, evil, and the darkness, passions, weaknesses, etc. of the soul.

to become virtuous, one becomes just, good and pious; one strives to acquire truth, resemble God and contemplate the Ideas.¹⁰⁸

Plotinus also specified the origin of evil as the soul's exclusive self-orientation which leads to emptiness, darkness and a lack of self-definition. This situation would consequently affect an individual's personal decisions.¹⁰⁹ For example:

The partial soul then is illuminated when it goes towards that which is before it—for then it meets reality—but when it goes towards what comes after it, it goes towards non-existence, but when it does this, when it goes towards itself, for, wishing to be directed towards itself it makes an image of itself (πρὸς αὐτὴν γὰρ βουλομένη τὸ μετ' αὐτὴν ποιεῖ εἶδωλον αὐτῆς), the non-existent, as if walking on emptiness and becoming more indefinite; and the indefinite image (εἶδωλον) of this is in every way dark: for it is altogether without reason and unintelligent and stands far removed from reality. Up until this time between, it (LZ: the partial soul) is in its own world, but when it looks at the image again, as it were directing its attention to it for a second time, it forms it and goes into it rejoicing.

III.9.3.7–end

Rist, referring to this passage, points out an important element in Plotinus' philosophy which is not always expressed explicitly but is significant in the discussion of how Augustine regarded the human will. Rist interprets the passage above as follows: the soul is carried to itself, when the will¹¹⁰ is set on itself

108 'The nature of that higher soul of ours will be free from all responsibility for the evils that man does and suffers ... But if opinion and reasoning belong to the soul, how is it free from sin (πῶς ἀναμάρτητος)? For opinion is a cheat and is the cause of much evil-doing. Evil is done when we are mastered by what is worse in us—for we are many—by desire or passion or an evil image. What we call thinking falsities is a making of mind-pictures (διάνοια φαντασία) which has not waited for the judgment of the reasoning faculty—we have acted under the influence of our worse parts, just as in sensation the perception of the joint entity may see falsely before the reasoning faculty has passed judgement on it. The intellect is either in touch with the proceedings or it is not, and so, sinless: but we ought rather to say that we are in touch with the intelligible in the intellect or we are not with the intelligible in ourselves; for one can have it and not have it available.' (I.1.9.1–15). See also *Enn.* I.2; I.6.6, 1–12; VI.2.18.15.

109 See *Enn.* III.2 and IV.8.4.10–end; Armstrong on self-isolation as sin in Plotinus (*Enneads*, IV, 408).

110 Augustine's definition of will *voluntas* is more elaborate than that of Plotinus. Plotinus does in fact emphasize that in order to actualize the intellect, the will must be oriented to the good, the Godhead (*Enn.* I.2.4).

(πρὸς αὐτὴν γὰρ βουλομένη τὸ μετ' αὐτὴν ποιεῖ εἶδωλον αὐτῆς). In doing so, it produces an image of itself¹¹¹ which comes after itself and is non-being (LZ: which is therefore a false self-image). Rist also refers to Plotinus' statement in v.1.1, that it is the will (of souls) to belong to themselves which contributes to bringing evil to the world and makes them forget their Father (the divine Νοῦς). This 'self-willing' pertains to Plotinus' conception of 'boldness' or 'audacity' (*Enn.* v.1., etc.). Yet τόλμα additionally entails the prime motive of differentiation from one's source which begun at the separation of the Νοῦς from the One. Self-willing thus makes up an integral part of the creative process inherent in all beings and affects the individual soul as well. It equally involves a 'descent'—the opposite movement of turning to one's source (ἐπιστροφή). Once descended however, Plotinus reminds, one is never completely separated from one's source.¹¹² Τόλμα also involves turning away from the free universality of its higher state to bind itself to particulars—a state of self-isolation or individualism (iv.8.4).¹¹³ In this way, τόλμα constitutes a twofold sin: turning away from one's higher source and self-isolation. Thus, the potential cause of evil in Plotinus' thought is what we would call the conscious and active will.

There are other aspects of the quote above which are useful to highlight in this context. Plotinus generally depicts the soul as turned in one of two directions. Upwards is to virtue, beauty and godliness; downwards is to matter, the human body, vice, darkness and to the condition of weakness in the soul.¹¹⁴ Plotinus' conception of matter, evil and sin is a subject of deep com-

111 Plotinus posits that there are images of oneself in oneself created by one's mind. Augustine makes the same claim. A self-image based upon material images is a false one (*Trin.* x.6.8).

112 E. Song draws some interesting conclusions concerning Plotinus' view on the soul's orientation and his 'ethic of the descent'. This consists of a two-fold ethic of caring: taking care of oneself, of the world and others. He explains the statements in which Plotinus seems to contradict this: (*Enn.* iv.8.7.1–8, vi.9.7.20–28; vi.7.31.21; and v.8.6.11). *Aufstieg und Abstieg der Seele Diesseitigkeit und Jenseitigkeit in Plotin's Ethik der Sorge* (Göttingen, 2009) 159–end of chapter: 'Schluss'.

113 Rist, *Road to Reality*, 123; See Armstrong's note on Plotinus and self-isolation at iv.8.4 (*Enneads* iv, 408). See also N.J. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma and the Descent of Being. An Exposition and Analysis* (New York, 1993).

114 'So just as when one goes up from virtue one comes to the beautiful and the good, when one goes down from vice one comes to absolute evil, taking vice as the starting point. One will contemplate it with the contemplation which belongs to absolute evil and participate in it when one becomes it: one enters altogether into "the region of unlikeness" when one sinks into it and has gone falling into the mud of darkness; for when the soul has fallen utterly into vice, it no longer has vice, but has changed to another nature, a worse one (for

plexity which actually deserves a more extensive treatment than I have given it here. I have omitted many scholarly discussions on this subject. Instead I have attempted to limit this exposition predominantly to aspects which are directly relevant to Plotinus' conception of images and imaging. Before moving on to the next topic, we will conclude with the comments of C. Horn, which will clear up any possible misconceptions. He warns that we should not mistake the metaphysical evil of matter for the moral evil in the soul of the individual.¹¹⁵ Although matter, according to Plotinus, is *per se* evil, it is morally indifferent. When the human soul is turned to matter, it tends to assume a morally deprived identity. Matter (LZ: or corporeality) is thus neither bad in the moral sense nor evil in the sense of being an antagonistic second principle independent of the One, as depicted in Manichaeism.¹¹⁶

3.7 The Divinity of the Intellect (2)

3.7.1 The Difficulties of the Soul; Defining the Intellect

The subsection above illustrated Plotinus' depiction of certain difficulties with which the soul must struggle. We will elaborate on some of these here. The soul's problems began with the condition of having forgotten her origin (V.1.1). When a soul incarnates into a body, she arrives in oblivion. In order to recollect her divine origin (which she knew before being born into a physical vehicle), she must activate that part of herself which is closest to the divine, the intellect. Plotinus says that this part of the soul is in most people inactive or neglected (V.1.12). Rist explains Plotinus' viewpoint in the following way: there are activities in the νοῦς which are normally unknown to us, just as we have perplexing and unconscious desires which are only brought to surface when we grasp them by our facility of sense or our facility of reason or both. Thus the highest part of the soul always remains above in the intelligible world and will not

vice which is mixed with anything of its contrary is still human). So it dies, as far as the soul can die, and its death, while it is still plunged in the body, is to sink in matter and be filled with it, and when it has gone out of the body, to lie in matter till it raises itself and some manage to look away from the mud: this is "going to Hades and falling asleep there." *Enn.* I.8.13.12–end.

Note the term here 'region of unlikeness' ἐν τῷ τῆς ἀνομοιότητος τόπῳ which Augustine likely borrowed from Plotinus for his famous passage in *Conf.* VII.10.16 to indicate the state of alienation from God: *in regione dissimilitudinis*. Augustine also associates sin and evil with the death of the soul in *Trin.* IV, (e.g., IV.12.15) a notion he also found in Paul (Rom. 5:12).

115 *Enn.* I.8.14.44–51, III.2.4.36–44.

116 C. Horn, 'Plotinus', in: F. Sheffield and J. Warren (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Ancient Philosophy* (New York, 2014) 596–609, 601.

be recognized by us unless we have attuned to the whole of the soul and live in accordance to it.¹¹⁷ Thus Plotinus advocates that we must not only become aware of our physical existence but most importantly the νοῦς in ourselves, its powers of perception—our ‘inner eye’ and then fine-tune our focus. We must be able to grasp immaterial intelligence¹¹⁸ and become our true self, by imitating the perfection of the divine Νοῦς. Yet how does one overcome one’s natural physical-sense orientation and remain attuned to the divine, especially if our highest region remains undescended?

It is important to note here that the entire book IV of the *Enneads* is devoted to the human soul and two treatises in particular are entitled *On Difficulties About the Soul* (IV.3 and IV.4). Yet the solutions to the questions posed in ‘The Divinity of the Intellect (1)’ are not always found there. In fact, one must search throughout the entire oeuvre before discovering even a sparse assertion on the relationship between the intellect and the lower soul, or the relationship between the human intellect and the Νοῦς. Let us review some of these passages. The following is a salient example of one of Plotinus’ descriptions of how the soul becomes an image of divine Intellect: by increasing its resemblance to it, by seeing Intellect and becoming godlike. This passage illustrates the richness of nuances in Plotinus’ view on the human intellect and its relationship to its divine counterpart.

The remaining possibility then, is for the soul to have received an intelligent life, as trace of the life of Intellect ... It is such a kind that it apprehends itself more clearly, but we apprehend it by means of it; by reasonings of this kind our soul is led back up to it, considering itself to be an image (εἰκόνα) of Intellect, as its life is a reflection and likeness of it, and when it thinks it becomes godlike and intellect-like; and if one asks it what sort of thing is that perfect universal Intellect which has primary knowledge of itself, it first comes to be in Intellect or makes room for Intellect to exercise its activity, and shows itself really in possession of the things of which it has the memory (μνήμην) in itself so that through soul which is its image (εἰκόνος), one can in some way see Intellect, through the soul which is brought about more precisely to its likeness, as far as a part of soul can come to likeness with Intellect.

v.3.8.35, 44–end

117 *Enn.* IV.8.8.10–11; Rist, *Road to Reality*, 85.

118 *Enn.* I.4: *On Well Being*, e.g., I.4.4.7–8, I.4.16.

Here Plotinus typically describes the actualization of one's intellect and assimilating the properties of the *Noûs* as if it is normal and or even automatic. But the last sentence in this quote 'as far as a part of soul can come to likeness with Intellect' indicates that this is not such a simple matter. The difficulties the soul must undergo in order to attain this goal are suggested in the continuation of the text:

9. It is probable then, that he who intends to know what Intellect really is must know the soul and the most divine part of soul. This could happen also in this way, if you first of all separated the body from man and, obviously, from yourself, and then the soul which forms it and, very thoroughly, sense-perception and desires and passions and all the rest of such fooleries, since they incline so very much towards the mortal. What remains of the soul is this which we said was an image of Intellect preserving something of its light, like the light of the sun which beyond its spherical mass, shines around it and from it.

V.3.9–10

Plotinus confirms here the real potential in the highest, mostly unconscious part of the human soul to eventually possess or experience directly some kind of divinity or light. Every soul definitely bears an inherent potential to *become* intellect which is the image of Intellect. It is only this higher region of the psyche which can potentially unite with the divine Intellect. By actualizing her intellect, the human soul-intellect will mirror the activity of the divine Soul prior to its creative act, when it turned to the *Noûs* to contemplate her source. The Soul then became one with *Noûs* and received its properties, the intelligible world, which enabled her to become *Noûs*, but only in her highest part. Yet in the passage above, Plotinus advocates, as he often does, the not-easy task of stripping away all the lower facets of self-consciousness (sense-perception, desires, passions, fooleries—all of which pertain to the descended soul) in order to come to the realization or pure perception of itself as an immortal image of the divine Intellect. Yet if or when this should happen, the soul will see that it only possesses a small quantity of this divine light, analogous to sunshine from the sun, 'preserving something of its light'. We can conjecture from this passage that, among other things, the human soul, with its attachment to its body and the material world, cannot perfectly duplicate this activity of its divine model. If this goal were ever to be realized, the human soul may intensify its experience of the divine, will become *νοῦς*, but will not become the *Noûs*—the divine demiurge. It will become not a god, but god-like. As indicated in the quote above, the soul actualizing her own light, will not assimilate

ALL of the divine Intellect's light. This is substantiated in the following passage mentioning—only in passing as it were—the difference between the human and the divine Intellect.

But when he reaches higher principles ... He will leave that behind (LZ: his lower nature) and choose another, the life of the gods: for it is to them, not to good men, that we are to be made like. Likeness to good men is the likeness of two pictures of the same subject to each other; but likeness to the gods is likeness to the model, a being of a different kind to ourselves.¹¹⁹

Enn. 1.2.7.24, 27–30

Especially the final clause, 'likeness to the gods is likeness to the model, a being of a different kind to ourselves' indicates Plotinus' view that the substance of the human intellect is lesser than that of the divine Intellect. Therefore he could not have intended that the human intellect was or would ever be equal in divinity to the divine Intellect. The following short statement underscores this concept even more concisely. 'If then the generator itself is Intellect, what is generated by it must be more defective than Intellect, but fairly close to it and like it.' (v.4.2.1–3).

We have touched on topics here which predominantly pertain to the subject of the ascent to God. Considering the problems concerning Plotinus' position of the divinity of the soul articulated above, we are now able to confirm that Plotinus did indeed differentiate between the soul's actualized intellect and the divine Intellect, yet these confirmations were mostly found in completely different contexts than those on the undescended intellect. We can also confirm here, that Plotinus' subtle differentiation of the intellect and the Intellect was most prominent in the context of imaging: an image cannot be equal to that what it images. Recalling Plotinus' cosmology, it is evident that the soul-intellect had a divine origin; it was designated as an individual part of the divine Intellect and the World Soul. We did not however solve the problem as to how Plotinus must have considered the differentiation between the consciousness of the intellect νοῦς and its lower rational counterpart. This issue will come to clarity in the next section on the ascent in which Plotinus' depiction of the elevation of consciousness to divine realms will be treated.

119 'Ὁμοίωσις δὲ ἡ μὲν πρὸς τούτους, ὡς εἰκὼν εἰκόνι ὁμοίωται ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἑκατέρᾳ. Ἡ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλον ὡς πρὸς παράδειγμα.

4 The Ascent: Intellectual Contemplation and the Soul's Ascent to Beauty

4.1 Introduction

The theme of the soul's ascent to the divine, ἀνάβασις, was not only an essential element in Plotinus' philosophy, it was certainly one of the most attractive aspects for Augustine in developing his doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*. Augustine's step-by-step Platonist accounts of the ascent from *Conf.*, discussed in Chapter 2.1, involved the movement of the soul: starting from the realm of senses, then inward to its immaterial region and then upward to God's (immaterial) illumination. This exposition on the Plotinian ascent will show in greater detail how a human soul (λόγος), as image of the Hypostasis All-Soul, ascends to the highest principle, the One, via the actualization of her intellect.

Plotinus' depiction of the ascent will be approached here in two general contexts: through acquiring knowledge ἐπιστήμη, γνῶσις and by the drive of love (Ἔρως) by beauty. Both were of enormous interest to Augustine. Especially in *Trin.*, Augustine's fusion of self-knowledge and self-love shows clear traces of Plotinus' views on both subjects.

As in Plotinus' treatments on the human being as image, the theme of the ascent is dispersed throughout the *Enneads* and discussed in different contexts, such as beauty, light, love and knowledge. It could certainly be said that one of Plotinus' main objectives is to describe in full what the ascent to divine transcendence entails through all possible angles. According to Porphyry, his student, Plotinus himself experienced the ascent to the first Hypostasis four times.¹²⁰ One of Plotinus' most famous accounts of the ascent is in the context of beauty from the treatise *On Beauty* (1.6). This work was popular in antiquity and noteworthy of mention here for a number of reasons. First of all, because there is a broad consensus among scholars that Augustine had read this treatise, evident by the references from this treatise in his works. The second is because Plotinus' notion of beauty is strongly connected to his notion of Ἔρως. However, *On Beauty* will not be the central focus of this exposition because love is only mentioned there sporadically. Other treatises of Plotinus are devoted fully to the theme love, such as VI.7¹²¹ and III.5 *On Love*.¹²² Here the theme

120 *The Life of Plotinus* 23, written by his student and close friend, Porphyry (included in Armstrong's translation of the *Enneads*).

121 VI.7: *How the Multiplicity of Forms Came Into Being; and on the Good*. Armstrong characterizes this treatise as 'the most intellectually and spiritually powerful of all Plotinus' ascents of the mind to God.' (*Enneads* VII, 79).

122 Bertozzi, 'On Eros in Plotinus'.

beauty also plays an instrumental role as that which moves one to love and to desire union with the beautiful. Thus the forces of love and desire are what drive the soul to return to the One.

Another treatise of Plotinus which is generally accepted as Augustine's source is *V.1*, already mentioned in the context of his cosmology and theogony, which also contains a depiction of the ascent. This treatise, as well as the others on knowledge and self-knowledge—such as *V.3* and *V.5*, are predominantly focused on an ascent to the divine Intellect. The treatises concerning beauty and love on the other hand, give a full description of the union with the One while passing through the Intellect. In every account of Plotinus' ascent, the contemplation of the intelligible world plays an instrumental role. Thus for this exposition, many different treatises will be useful for both themes of knowledge and love.

The material from the previous section on the intellect already included an impression of an epistemological ascent. To schematize this briefly, it dealt with sense perception and the two kinds of knowledge, discursive and intuitive contemplation. The images taken in by sense perception from the soul's outer environment entered consciousness and could be recalled by the powers of memory. These material images were judged by the higher consciousness, which entailed a collaboration of the two modes of thought of the rational soul contemplating the Ideas.

As discussed in 'On the Divinity of the Intellect (1) and (2)', there still remain some unanswered questions concerning Plotinus' view on the divinity of the soul and on the relationship of the human intellect to the divine Intellect. As discussed there, Plotinus' descriptions of the human *νοῦς* are sometimes so closely associated with the divine *Νοῦς*, that a decipherment is required to determine which is which. This is a problem which especially occurs in his depictions of the ascent. For this reason, this section will focus on the ways in which the human intellect resembles and differs from the divine Intellect. Another problem pointed out in the last section concerned the lack of clarity in Plotinus' distinction between the consciousness of the human *λόγος* and the *νοῦς*, and their different modes of thought. This was left hanging in that section and thus will be addressed here as well.

This section will begin with an exposition on Plotinus' account of the *Νοῦς*' relationship with the One and how the *Νοῦς* came into existence. Other aspects of the divine *Νοῦς* are important to take into consideration, such as its contemplation of its own Ideas and self-knowledge which will also be discussed in the context of the human *λόγος* and *νοῦς*. Regarding the discussion of the divinity of the soul discussed in section 3, this section includes an exposé on Plotinus' depiction of the eventual descent or 'failure' in the realm of the *Νοῦς*. Plotinus'

accounts of the ascent by knowledge and union with the Intellect will be followed up by a treatment on the ascent to the One through Ἐρως. This will deal with Plotinus' equivalency of love and desire and accordingly, the manifestation of love on all planes of existence: of the senses, through the soul in the intellect and beyond.

4.2 *The Divine Intellect's Relationship with the One*

We recall from Plotinus' theology that the divine Intellect reproduced itself by splitting itself into individual intellects. Consequently, the human intellect had a strong affinity with the divine Intellect as its origin and model. Plotinus demonstrated this affinity in a number of ways, for example, how the Intellect came into existence from the One. In the first inchoate stage, there was the 'desiring Νοῦς' or 'unformed sight'.¹²³ At its conception, it desired to learn its source, thus turned (ἐπιστροφή) and contemplated the One. In turning to its source, the Νοῦς received the properties from the One which rendered the Intellect its formation: the Νοῦς realized it existed and therefore began to think. The Intellect became Being and Thought, its unformed sight turned into 'seeing'. It remained in a state of contemplation of itself and its Life principles—the intelligible world.

Hence the relationship of the Intellect to the One is echoed in the relationship of the human νοῦς to the divine Νοῦς: initially attracted by worldly beauty, the soul longs to know its source. To do so, it must look up to its Father, who exists inside oneself. It falls in love with his immense beauty and magnificence and is filled with the desire to know, to learn the truth and to be one with its origin. It sees as well that it must know itself. As such, the longing for beauty and to possess what it loves moves the human soul inward and upward to the higher spheres of existence. Thus we can assume that the human νοῦς theoretically possesses the capacity to think and reflect in somewhat the same manner as the Νοῦς. The mode of thinking of the divine Νοῦς is characterized by the immediacy of apprehension of itself, its eternal Ideas.

4.3 *The Divine Intellect*

As was demonstrated in the section three, all images—the soul and intellect—were differentiated from their sources. Yet Plotinus described the human νοῦς and the divine Νοῦς in paradoxical terms. On the one hand, he stated that the Νοῦς—whether divine or human—always remained in the noetic region. Con-

123 On the desiring, loving and thinking Νοῦς: e.g., *Enn.* 111.8.11.20, VI.7.35.20–28; Pigler, *Plotin, l'amour*, 89–105; Emilsson, *Intellect*, 69–123.

sequently, the human νοῦς did not totally belong to the lower region of the human soul. On the other hand, the higher reasoning part of the soul was not truly 'ours', so to speak. Yet it would progressively become 'ours' when we activated or actualized our intellect, in other words, became our true selves.¹²⁴ Another paradox in Plotinus' conception of the divine Νοῦς entailed viewing it from the perspective of its separateness from humans.¹²⁵ The Νοῦς was not inclined towards human souls, nor did it reach out to them.¹²⁶ The soul was required to move—or better said—to be moved upwards to the Νοῦς by its craving to know and learn of its source. Also, by conscious effort to obtain self-knowledge, the soul was driven upwards (*Enn.* III.8.8).¹²⁷ Her acquisition of knowledge and judgment were hence dependent upon the divine Νοῦς. The principles (Ideas) by which the individual νοῦς judged the material world were radiated from above it (v.3.3; VI.7.21). Now let us pursue these important aspects of Plotinus' epistemology in even greater detail.

The divine Intellect consists of a triad Thought, Being and Life, which manifests in its intelligible world. This triad is depicted as reflected in the self-knowledge of the human νοῦς.¹²⁸ Yet there is another triad at the level of the Νοῦς, which is more obviously reflected in the human intellect: νοῦς-νόησις-νοητόν: the intellect or the thinker (the subject doing the thinking), the object of one's thought and the activity of thinking itself which altogether form a perfect unity.¹²⁹ This triad primarily describes the self-contemplation of the divine Intellect, the activity of it contemplating its own intelligible world, the Ideas. This results in a unity in which the Intellect is a perfect representation of the

124 v.3.3.26. Plotinus does not seem to designate the νοῦς as 'I'. Remes, *Self*, 4–5; Rappe, *Reading Neo-Platonism*, xiii.

125 Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 28–32.

126 But again this is not an absolute assertion of Plotinus. Elsewhere he contends that the soul is yanked upwards by the Intellect. This has to do with the attraction of the beauty of the One which the human soul first perceives in the Intellect as pure Beauty (VI.7.36.19).

127 Brachtendorf (*Struktur*, 29) mentions Beierwaltes' observation (1991) that the Νοῦς does perform a certain mediating function to the human soul, joining the Soul to that which is higher to her, her highest part, as separate pure Νοῦς to the One. In my view, this mediating function is also present in the transcendent Λόγος, as Fattal has suggests. *Logos et image chez Plotin*, e.g., 13.

128 III.8.8; v.9.10.9–15.

129 Plotinus discusses the unity in Νοῦς by the triad of thinking: νοῦς-νόησις-νοητόν in VI.7.41.10, v.3.5.44; and 'Know yourself' γνῶθι σαυτόν (VI.7.41.24). Augustine also makes use of this triad in *Trin.* VI.10.11. Another triad which Plotinus discusses concerns sight: the seer, that which is seen and sight itself (III.8.11.1–7). See Halfwassen, on the triadic nature of the Νοῦς (*Plotin*, 80–84).

Intelligible; as such, the subject is perfectly one with its object (VI.7.36.10). Plotinus' designates this state as a consciousness of the one-and-the many ἐν πολλὰ: the Νοῦς' awareness of its own multiplicity (the world of Ideas) from which its unity is derived. Thought is characterized by Plotinus as a substance,¹³⁰ in the hypostasis Intellect as well as in the human intellect (III.8.8; VI.7). The relationship of Thought to Idea is never one of exteriority, which means, that the Ideas in the Intellect are exclusively inside the Νοῦς, never outside of it.¹³¹ This holds true for the ideas of the human νοῦς. Accordingly, Plotinus regards the Ideas of the divine Intellect which are contemplated in the human intellect as completely interior to it, in the sense that the eternal Ideas are accessible, intelligible to it by virtue of the kinship of the human intellect to the divine intellect (Enn. IV.7.10). Thus in the consciousness of the intellect, material images are, in contrast, essentially exterior; the Ideas, the Νοῦς and the One, interior. The particular functions of the human intellect are only activated when focused upon the realm of the divine Intellect. Plotinus highlights the complete actualization of the intellect and its consubstantiality with the divine, by saying, for example, that the intellect will see in itself that it is immortal and that it has apprehended 'the eternal by its eternity and all the things in the intelligible world having become itself an intelligible universe full of light, illuminated by truth from the Good.' (IV.7.10.34–36).¹³²

The divine Νοῦς is characterized by true self-reference which does not lead to inner contradictions. Therefore it encounters in its objects, the Ideas, the same state of thinking as itself. The Νοῦς sees itself as thinking in the totality of the Ideas. In this consciousness, the knower is equal to that which is known. The Νοῦς does not learn; the totality of his knowing is complete and autarkic.

130 Plotinus on substances, qualities, the Platonic doctrine of categories, genera and species in Enn. VI.1–3 *On Kinds of Being* against the doctrine of categories of Aristotle and the Stoa.

131 See note 39 on Plotinus' borrowing of Aristotle's doctrine of Νοῦς combining it with Plato's theory of Ideas, which entails a correction of Plato's *Timaeus*. In the latter work, the demiurge contemplated the Ideas which were located somewhere beyond in the transcendent world, but not in himself. Plotinus situated the Platonic World of Ideas in the demiurge from the *Timaeus*, equating it with the Νοῦς of Aristotle. In this way, he correlated the contemplation of the Ideas with the conception of the Νοῦς in its activity of thinking itself. Subsequently, contemplation of Ideas became an important element not only in his epistemology but in the notion of the interior ascent of the human soul in actualizing its intellect.

132 Armstrong ('Earthly Beauties', 72–76) remarks that Plotinus glorified the Intelligible World, such as in Enn. V.8.4.7–10; VI.7.12.22–30 and III.4.3.22. (This stands in contrast to Augustine who does not glorify the Ideas as such, nor does he depict the human soul uniting with them.)

It has everything it needs in itself (v.3.10.50–end). It has no need to search, as it is pure reality and pure Light.¹³³

Applied to the human soul (λόγος and νοῦς), a unity of self or mind is achieved upon knowing or contemplating—not just its own ideas, but judging them at the sight of the Ideas in the Νοῦς. Plotinus differentiates the ways in which activities of acquiring self-knowledge and contemplating the Ideas are carried out, namely by the two modes of thinking corresponding to the two levels of the rational soul: διάνοια or διανοητικόν and νόησις. We will now proceed to focus on the human level, the rational soul actualizing its intellect.

4.4 *Contemplation of the Ideas and Self-Knowledge*

4.4.1 The Human Soul Λόγος Contemplating the Ideas

For the summary here on Plotinus' notion of self-knowledge and the contemplation of the Ideas concerning both the λόγος and the νοῦς (the continuation of these topics in section three.), we will rely on J. Brachtendorf's study.¹³⁴ The human soul is conscious of itself being finite and that its reasoning facility is limited (v.3.1–6). It recognizes itself as an individual who desires more self-knowledge, because its sense perception does not truly satisfy the soul. It possesses insight of itself in so far that it recognizes its capacity to make the

133 Below is an excellent example of Plotinus' depiction of an experience of light, witnessed by the intellect. Note how Plotinus' description is full of paradoxes.

"This, then, is what the seeing of Intellect is like; this also sees by another light the things illuminated by that first nature, and sees the light in them; when it turns its attention to the nature of the things illuminated, it sees the light less; but if it abandons the things it sees and looks at the medium by which it sees them, it looks at light and the source of light. But since Intellect must not see this light as external, we must go back again to the eye: this will itself sometimes know a light which is not the external alien light, but it momentarily sees before the external light a light of its own, a brighter one; it either springs out from itself at night in the dark or, when the eye does not want to look at anything else, it lowers the eyelids before it and all the same sends out light, or the eye's possessor squeezes it and sees the light in it. For then, in not seeing it sees, and sees them most of all: for it sees light; but other things which it saw had the form of light but were not light. Just so, Intellect, veiling itself from other things and drawing itself inward, when it is not looking at anything will see a light, not a distinct light in something different than itself, but suddenly appearing, (LZ: this is the One) alone by itself in independent purity, so that Intellect is at a loss to know whence it has appeared, whether it has come from outside or within, and after it has gone away, will say "It was within, and yet it was not within." (v.5.7.17–end).

134 *Struktur*, 28–32; Plotinus treats self-knowledge predominantly in *Enn.* v.3. For commentary on v.3, see W. Beierwaltes, *Selbsterkenntnis und Erfahrung der Einheit: Plotins Enneade v 3*, Text, translation, interpretation and explanations by Werner Beierwaltes (Frankfurt am Main, 1967); Rappe, *Reading Neo-Platonism*, 27–33.

exterior things (εἰδωλα, φαντασία, τύποι) interior. Discursive reasoning includes the self-sufficient judgment of visual images (whether actual or mental) and the awareness that these images correspond to true Ideas. The soul also realizes its capacity for discursive thinking, as well as the existence of a power which is better than itself. Eventually it realizes its dependence on its higher, non-discursive reasoning νοῦς and the νοῦς' affinity with the divine Νοῦς in order for it to be informed of the whole panorama of reality.

The human soul-λόγος imitates the divine World-Soul-Λόγος in that it strives for knowledge of itself and of its source. As depicted in the theogony, the divine Soul must turn to the Νοῦς to obtain this knowledge. The Νοῦς, as differentiated from the Soul, is located outside of her. Yet in order to find the Νοῦς, she must first turn inward to herself and search there and then search for self-knowledge. Self-knowledge in the World Soul-Λόγος is however not complete; therefore it must search further, ultimately to the divine Νοῦς. In doing so, it imitates the Νοῦς as its example, as when the Νοῦς turned to the One at its inception.

Obtaining true self-knowledge is dependent upon one's ability to contemplate the Ideas. Thanks to the human soul's discursive thinking and natural connection to its highest region, the νοῦς, whose contemplative power νόησις is more efficacious, it is able to judge the sense images which have entered the soul's consciousness, using the criteria or standards (Ideas) which it sees in itself which in turn exist in the Νοῦς. The human νοῦς can perceive the Ideas Good, Justice or Rightness as the standards of Good and Right, because they are at its disposal. Thus it does not need to search for the eternal principles because they already exist in itself (v.3.4.15–23). The discursive region of the soul possesses an impression of the contents of the Νοῦς (v.3.4.21–22).¹³⁵

The self-knowledge of the soul-λόγος (διανοητικόν) indeed reflects the Νοῦς in that it conceives of itself—in its own ideas as well as in the corresponding higher Idea world. Yet it cannot do so directly in the ἐν πολλά manner of unity as the Νοῦς.¹³⁶ Nor can the identification of knowing with the known,—the unity of the subject and the object of knowing—take place on this level of consciousness (v.3.6.25–30). The soul-λόγος realizes that it is not this Being, but that it receives its being from the Νοῦς (v.3.6.23–26). Plotinus states that the human

135 As mentioned in the previous section, Emilsson discusses the difficulties of establishing the distinction between the two modes of thought here, between the διάνοια and νόησις/θεωρία and discusses various standpoints on this matter (*Intellect*, 176–191). Blumenthal, 'Soul and Intellect', 82–104.

136 Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 15–19.

νοῦς is an image of divine Νοῦς, due to its ability to become one with the Νοῦς. Yet the contemplation of the eternal Ideas begins on the level of discursive reasoning. Plotinus even seems to suggest here that it is mostly carried out on this level and is thus usually incomplete.

The νοῦς does possess the potential capacity to imitate the divine Νοῦς in contemplating the whole of the intelligible world in a direct manner. Yet the λόγος is only able to conceive of individual Ideas in mere isolation and by abstraction, due to its multiplicity and temporal orientation.¹³⁷ Because the divine Νοῦς does not and cannot contain any kind of discursive thought (IV.4.1.15), the faculty of discursive thinking can therefore only grasp the Νοῦς, its ἐν πολλὰ structure (itself or anything at all for that matter), in the form of paradoxical statements. This means that material scientific knowledge can only involve a partial understanding of separate concepts and Ideas.¹³⁸ Reference to the structure of the intelligible world in the soul-λόγος can likewise only be expressed in separate individual statements which are connected to other individual separate statements (IV.9.5).

4.4.2 The Human Soul-Noῦς Contemplating the Ideas

But since we have come to be here below again and in soul, we seek for some kind of persuasion, as if we wanted to contemplate the archetype in the image. Perhaps, then, we ought to teach our soul how Intellect contemplates itself, and to teach that part of the soul which is in some way intellectual, since we call it discursively intelligent and by this naming indicate that it is a kind of intellect or that it has its power through and from Intellect. This therefore should know that in its own case too it comes to know what it sees and knows what it speaks. And if it was what it speaks, then it would in this way know itself (γινώσκειν). But since the things which it speaks are from above, or come to it from above, whence it also comes itself, it could happen to it, since it is a rational principle (λόγος) and receives things akin to it and fits them akin to itself, in this way to know (γινώσκειν) itself. Let it then transpose the image to the true Intellect, the one [we observed] which was the same as the truths it thought which are really existent and primary, ...

V.3.6.14–30

¹³⁷ E.g., IV.4.1.30–35 and V.9.8.20–end.

¹³⁸ Emilsson, *Intellect*, 207–213.

As illustrated in the passage above, the human mind becomes conscious of itself with the help of discursive thinking, which includes its orientation to the transmitted thinking principles from above.¹³⁹ Thus the soul-λόγος' manner of contemplation allows for an entrance into the self-conception of the Νοῦς. Contemplation in the modes of the νοῦς-θεωρία or νόησις merely approaches the unified self-relationship of the divine Νοῦς. Hence the νοῦς can be made present to oneself not only with the assistance of discursive thinking but also by obtaining a direct connection to the intuitive, self-conception of the Νοῦς. Instead of just 'thinking' the Νοῦς, it is possible as well to see Him in us and to perceive Him (ἰδεῖν καὶ αἰσθάνεσθαι) (v.3.4.4, 23–30). From this we can infer that non-discursive thought in the νοῦς has a vision-like character (for example in III.8.11.1)¹⁴⁰ which is entirely non-propositional (as opposed to διανοητικόν).¹⁴¹ The νοῦς contemplates the Ideas directly and not their images. It is in fact purified of all material images (v.3.9). The full consciousness of the νοῦς consists of an immediate and infallible grasp of the whole noetic sphere all at once: a full understanding of it with a clear and perfect grasp of all its relations (I.8.2).

When the soul is united with the Νοῦς, or in the noetic state of mind, the Νοῦς ontologically transmits to the human being its properties and sight of the divine Ideas. The individual then becomes a pure, separate νοῦς of supra-individual magnitude. The soul does not think of itself anymore as an ordinary human being. Having been pulled up to the higher level, it perceives itself as the better, purer part of the soul, which is allowed to soar up to this spiritual activity, so that she may contemplate there. In this realm, the soul becomes her 'true self'.¹⁴²

We will conclude this subsection with a passage which summarizes the essence of Plotinus' epistemological ascent. It illustrates the contemplation of

139 Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 24–34.

140 Emilsson warns that one should hesitate to apply the term 'vision' to all cases of intellection (*Intellect*, 191–198). Blumenthal asserts that intellection is not a 'process' but a mystical experience ('Soul and Intellect', 95).

141 A debate prevails as to whether Plotinus' non-discursive thought is primary to discursive. Emilsson argues that the contrast between discursive thought (by means of images and representations) and non-discursive thought of the things themselves (I.Z.: the Ideas) is analogous to the difference between knowledge obtained by reports and knowledge obtained by direct experience. Interpreted in this way, non-discursive thought is no doubt primary in the sense of being a pre-condition of discursive thought (*Intellect*, 14–15). I am convinced that Emilsson is correct. See further Emilsson, *Intellect*, Chapter 4: Discursive and Non-discursive Thought and Chapter 5.

142 E.g., *Enn.* v.3.1 whole chapter; III.9.3, III.9.6.7–end, III.9.8.7–13.

the Ideas and the divine Intellect, by the consciousness of the λόγος and then the νοῦς; the two kinds of knowledge and two modes of thought.

But as for the kinds of knowledge (ἐπιστήμαι) which exist in a rational soul, those which are sense-objects—if one ought to speak of “kinds of knowledge” (ἐπιστήμας) of these; ‘opinion’ is really the suitable name for them—are posterior to their objects and likenesses of them; but those which are of intelligible objects, which are certainly the genuine kinds of knowledge (ἐπιστήμαι), come from the Intellect to rational soul and do not think any sense-object; but in so far as they are kinds of knowledge, they are each and all of the active objects which they think, and they have from them within them the object of thought and the thought, because Intellect is within, which is the actual primary realities, and always keeps company with itself and exists in actuality and does not seek to apprehend its objects as if it did not have them or was trying to obtain them, or was going through them discursively as if they were not ready at hand before any discursive process—these are the experiences of the soul—but it stands firm in itself, being all things together ...

V.9.7.1–13

8. If then, the thought [of Intellect] is of what is within it, that which is within it, is its immanent form and this is the Idea. What then is this? Intellect and the intelligent substance; each individual Idea is not other than Intellect, but each is Intellect. And Intellect as a whole is all the Forms, and each individual Form is an individual intellect, as the whole body of knowledge is all its theorems, but each theorem is a part of the whole, not as being spatially distinct, but as having its particular power in the whole. This Intellect therefore is in itself and since it possesses itself in peace, is everlasting fullness.

V.9.8.1–8

This passage adequately reflects the material in this section, showing how the thinking of the human intellect reflects the self-thinking of the divine Νοῦς. As Brachtendorf also correctly argued, the text demonstrates the strong connection between the soul-λόγος and the soul-νοῦς as well as the former's total dependence upon the latter for its higher knowledge. Although Brachtendorf explains the connection between the λόγος and the νοῦς in a convincing manner, he does not question Plotinus' position on the divinity of the soul or address the lack of differentiation between the human intellect and the

divine. Nor does the passage above supply a satisfying transition between the two, especially with the claim: 'each individual Form is an individual intellect'. Again, the confusion is rampant.

Let us now return to these issues to see if they can be resolved in a satisfying way with the insights acquired in this section.

4.5 *Continuation of the Discussion of the Divinity of the Intellect and the Difficulties of the Soul*

As noted in the preceding section in Plotinus' depiction of the rational soul, there seemed to be a gray zone between διάνοια and νόησις.¹⁴³ This became puzzling when considering how Plotinus sometimes described the intellect as undescended, unconnected to the body and having an immediate connection with the divine Intellect. These assertions were not reconcilable with his remarks on the human soul, that it was a unified whole.¹⁴⁴ The gray area there which he did not account for, entailed, for example, how to pass from the one consciousness to the other, especially when the higher form of thought was seemingly a giant leap into the sea of non-representative understanding of all divine Ideas, as a result of an alleged 'complete union' with the second Hypostasis. Thus to complement Brachtendorf's summaries, we will explore further. It was noted in the previous section as well, that with some effort, it was possible to find statements in the *Enneads* (which were usually utmost brief) in which Plotinus suggested the differentiation between the human νοῦς and the divine Νοῦς. Here is another example, albeit slightly enigmatic:

Being and Intellect are therefore one nature; so therefore are the real beings and the active actuality of being and Intellect of this kind; and the thoughts of this kind are the form and shape of being and its active actuality (LZ: here he is referring to the intelligible world of the Νοῦς). But they are thought by us as one before the other because they are divided by our thinking. For the dividing intellect is a different one, but the undivided Intellect which does not divide is being and all things. (v.9.8.18–

143 As regards the contemplation of the Ideas by the λόγος: see e.g., Blumenthal, 'Soul and Intellect', 82–104; and Emilsson, *Intellect*, 176–191.

144 This would naturally clash as well with his assertion that the human being too is a whole entity; e.g., 'We must certainly too consider soul as being in body (whether it does in fact exist before it or in it) since it is from the combination of body and soul that "the complete living creature takes its name."' (*Enn.* I.1.3.1–2: the title of the treatise I.1. is: *What is the Living Being and What is Man?*)

end) What then are the things in the one Intellect which we divide in our thinking? For they are in repose, but we must bring them forward.

V.9.9.1

Here Plotinus presents us with two kinds of intellects: the dividing and the undivided. First he refers to the divine *Noûs*, who is without exception undivided. In its perfect unity with its own Ideas; it is of one nature, one Being and one Intellect, possessing true reality. [Note however that the Intellect, after it has divided itself into individual intellects or having produced a *Λόγος*—the All-Soul, does not change in nature in any way (*Enn.* V.1.11–17, 22–29)]. Plotinus refers here to the human mind as the dividing intellect, referring to its fragmented thought processes. Upon contemplating higher realities (the Ideas), its thoughts occur in a logical sequence, one after the other.¹⁴⁵ Thinking in a successive, logical or analytical manner essentially pertains to the activity of the soul-*λόγος* and to ordinary consciousness. Hence, this passage, in my view, seems to confirm Plotinus' conception that the *νοûς* is therefore never truly separated from the *λόγος*. This would also satisfy his claim of the unity of the human soul. The soul-*λόγος* is either oriented to its *νοûς*—which is always oriented to the divine—or it is oriented to the lower part of itself, managing its physical functioning.

We recall from the previous section that Plotinus did indeed depict the attainment of the actualization of the intellect as laden with difficulties, yet these were mostly treated in a different context than that of the *νοûς*-*Noûs* relationship. These will now be briefly recapitulated in order to attempt to further reconcile Plotinus' statements on the divinity of the human intellect. In the subsection 'Matter, Evil, Sin and Error', various tendencies of the human soul were considered which prevented her from obtaining actualization. These included forgetting her origin, poor contemplation, a false self-image and a problem with the will. All of these involved an incomplete vision of divine, transcendent reality, an exclusive orientation towards the material realm or the

145 One might also argue that Plotinus is referring to the human intellect here as the 'undivided' as he seems to do in *Enn.* V.1.20.14. Yet it would seem highly unlikely that Plotinus would designate the human intellect as 'being and all things'. *Enn.* V.9.10.9–15 seems to express the sequential nature of the *νοûς* mode of thought: that time and place (aspects which do not pertain to the divine) are present in the human intellect. This passage is also exceptional in that Plotinus claims that the triad Being, Life and Thought (properties of the divine Intellect) are present in the human intellect as well. In Chapter 7.3, this subject comes up again in the framework of the discussion of *Enn.* V.3.5.6–20: concerning the (impossible) notion of self-knowledge attained by only a part of the mind. It remains puzzling how to relate these two different statements.

belief that the images of material reality were real in such a way that one mistook opinions for absolute truth. Here too, we confirmed, the gulf of difference between the experience of the most divine part of the soul and that part which makes up daily, ordinary consciousness in the physical world.

Moore offers a different explanation than Brachtendorf, which also contributes somewhat to resolving the gray areas between the λόγος and the νοῦς.¹⁴⁶ He states, the soul falls into error only when it ‘falls in love’ with the images εἰδωλα, mistaking these for archetypes. When this occurs, the soul will make judgments independently of its higher part and will fall into sin (ἁμαρτία), that is, it will miss the mark of right governance which is its proper nature.¹⁴⁷ Since such a fallen soul is almost a separate being from the intellect (for it has ceased to fully contemplate its prior or higher part), it will be subject to the judgment of the νοῦς and will be forced to endure a chain of incarnations in various bodies, until it finally remembers its true self. It will then turn its mind back to the contemplation of its higher part and return to its natural state (*Enn.* IV.8.4).¹⁴⁸

Moore explains further: even though Plotinus says that no soul can govern matter and remain unaffected by its contact, he assures us that the highest soul remains unaffected by the fluctuations and chaotic affections of matter, for it never ceases to productively contemplate its prior—which is to say: it never leaves its proper place. At the same time, Plotinus emphasizes that even when the soul falls (incarnates), she will remain a part of the unity of the ‘we’, for despite any forgetfulness that may occur on her part, she continues to owe her existence to the presence of her higher part—the intellect.

Moore’s sharp insights in Plotinus’ psychology correctly epitomizes the paradoxical quality of Plotinus’ philosophy: in spite of the sometimes major differences in the tendencies of the three individual levels of the soul, the different selves continuously fluctuate and influence one another. In this way, too, the soul retains her unity. Yet like Brachtendorf, Moore neither addresses the fact

146 See E. Moore, ‘Plotinus (204–270 C.E.)’, in: *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, A Peer-reviewed Academic Resource*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/plotinus/#SSH2b.i>. April 2013.

147 ‘The individual souls, certainly, have an intelligent desire consisting in the impulse to return to itself springing from the principle from which they came into being, but they also possess a power directed to the world here below, like a light which depends from the sun in the upper world but does not grudge its abundance to what comes after it, and they are free from sorrow if they remain with universal soul in the intelligible, but in heaven (I.Z: in the realm of the Νοῦς) with the universal soul they can share in its government like those who live with a universal monarch share in the government of his empire ...’ IV.8.4.1–12. The remainder of this book has to do with the descent. This treatise is entitled *On the Descent of the Soul*.

148 See also *Enn.* IV.4.1–3.

that Plotinus deems the intellect as divine and is able to unite in a total way with its divine model, completely unlike the λόγος.

With this in mind, we return now to Plotinus' differentiation of the contemplation of Ideas and self-knowledge in the λόγος and the νοῦς, and make an attempt at another solution. Considering the interdependency of the different parts of the soul, the obvious conclusion must be that all the traits of the divine Νοῦς delineated above rarely occur altogether at once in the human νοῦς. When speaking of the intellect, Plotinus often advocates a positive theology to the extreme, an idealistic one. He often describes the union with the Intellect as if it were automatic. In conjunction with his other statements on the soul, we can deduce that humans rarely completely actualize their intellect, if at all.

Furthermore, the human intellect is likely never able to glimpse the entire Thought or Intelligible World; at least not on its own volition. It is dependent on the Νοῦς and must receive this vision by illumination. Were this ever to happen, I assume, it would occur in a unforgettable, momentary flash of enormous impact, similar to the way in which Plotinus describes the union with the One (as suggested in *Enn.* v.5.7.27). Seen in this way, the divine knowledge acquired by the intellect is necessarily fragmentary. Additionally, the soul-intellect's mode of thinking is usually discursive, alternating occasionally with experiences of an immediate and intuitive grasp likened to that of the Νοῦς. For the finite human mind, νοῦς, it seems nearly impossible to develop perfect, independent, self-referential and complete self-knowledge. Totality and autarky can only exist in the Νοῦς.¹⁴⁹ For the human intellect, only a *participation* in the self-relationship of the infinite Νοῦς is attainable, which is neither total.

The question now arises, if the intellect can participate in the self-relationship or self-referentiality of the divine Intellect, what happens to the soul's 'historical self' once it has become intellect, its true self? Does it discard momentarily that which makes a human a human: its individuality, as a finite being endowed with mind? Does becoming 'we' involve putting off 'self-consciousness' ... or just egotistic tendencies which lead to sin and illusion? We will not attempt to unravel the questions on the self in this study; there are already

¹⁴⁹ Another obvious difference between the human and the divine Intellect is that the human intellect is not world-creative (!). However, Plotinus comments that when living things produce (not necessarily in the sense of physical reproduction), they are, like the divine, creative by contemplation and fill all things with rational principles and contemplation (iii.8.7.19–23). I interpret this in the following way: Plotinus is emphasizing here the fertility of intellectual contemplation as a transformation of the contents of the mind into universal truth. Plotinus also urges to sculpt oneself in order to purify and beautify oneself (ii.9 and i.6).

many scholarly discussions on this topic.¹⁵⁰ Suffice it to say, that it is altogether likely that Plotinus intended the ‘actualization of one’s true self’ as a perception only experienced in intense momentary glimpses. Additionally, it seems that the intellect’s actualization only occurred piecemeal, that there always remained a region of one’s intellect beyond one’s own awareness.

To conclude this section, we will recapitulate briefly the clarifications provided here on Plotinus’ psychology and do so in terms of his depiction of the imaging process. The human intellect, as image of Intellect, is always inferior to its model. Accordingly, it should be understood as of lesser substance than its source. The human soul cannot perfectly duplicate the activity of its divine model. If this goal were ever to be attained, the human soul would intensify its experience of the divine and identify itself with it. Yet this would not mean that it would truly become the divine Νοῦς. It will become—not a god but ‘god-like’. As regards the relationship of the λόγος to the νοῦς: given the λόγος is an image of its νοῦς, the axiom of imaging mentioned above will likewise dictate that the λόγος—as well as its thinking activities—are of lesser substance than the intellect itself and its activities.

Actually, one could question why there must be a distinction between these two modes of thought. In practice, the λόγος is dealing with itself, its own thoughts in the mode of discursive thinking; in νόησις, it is oriented to more universal thoughts of the intelligible world. The distinction should not be rigorous, as this would entail a severance in the soul, which Plotinus seems at times to attempt avoiding. His doctrine of imaging dictates that all souls are one and even the individual soul, imaging the transcendent Soul, possesses a unity (even in its vast multiplicity). Thus we must conclude that the soul-λόγος, just as the transcendent Λόγος in the Godhead, which always has an immediate contact with the transcendent Νοῦς, is always capable of being in contact with its own νοῦς. This is not just its potential, it is its privilege. Its adherence to the material temporal world will hinder the actualization of the intellect because the material world generally consists of an illusory, confusing reality. The good will of the soul, that is, its desire for ultimate Good and orientation to God, will always provide advancement (VI.8.3–4).

We must not lose sight of why this issue originally became of importance. For some reason, Augustine did not criticize Plotinus in his appraisal of Platonism in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei* for his position on the divinity of the soul. This would

150 Brachtendorf (*Struktur*, 32–33). C. Horn interprets individuality in association with the Νοῦς (in *Enn.* v.8.11) in a positive sense: ‘Selbstbezüglichkeit des Geistes bei Plotin und Augustin’, in: Brachtendorf (ed.) *Gott und Sein Bild*, 81–103, note 81; Remes, *Self*, 239–257; O’Daly, *Plotinus Self*.

seem highly appropriate, considering his harsh criticism of the Manichaeans and of others who likewise embraced such a tenet. Could the reason why Augustine refrained to criticize Plotinus on this point be that he had studied Plotinus' philosophy so well that he was sensitive to the doctrinal inconsistencies and also understood that Plotinus' psychology subtly neutralized his statements that the soul or intellect was divine? This inquiry will be elaborated much further in various sections in Chapter 9, once we have assimilated the rest of the material of this study.

Finally, I must concede with Blumenthal (and not Armstrong)¹⁵¹ that Plotinus' doctrines of soul and intellect do indeed contain numerous, knotted-up inconsistencies and paradoxes. In my opinion, they were generally caused by Plotinus' incongruent statements on the divinity of the human intellect. These can indeed be explained and justified, as we have done here, yet not without spilling much ink. Another point must be underlined here: the authors utilized in these expositions on Plotinus' teachings of soul and intellect (Brachtendorf, Blumenthal, Emilsson, Moore, and Atkinson¹⁵²) neglected to include in their studies how the conception of imaging played an instrumental role in these issues, as I have shown here. My perspective provides a more complete explanation as to how Plotinus viewed the relationship of the soul-intellect to her λόγος.

To underline this more realistic picture of the human intellect and Plotinus' paradoxical concepts, we should recall one of the traits of the intellect which potentially leads to sin mentioned in section three: audacity or self-assertion, τόλμα. This was an act initiated by the Νοῦς at the time of its coming into existence from the One, which essentially entailed a descent and turning away from one's origin. The human intellect certainly inherited this tendency: to fall back into normal consciousness after glimpsing the intelligible world and later believing himself to be an independent, self-sufficient being. Yet there is still another sin or disability which the Νοῦς has left to its posterity: the frustration of overcoming and surpassing one's own thought in order to fully see the One. This topic will serve as a prelude to the following section on love, desire and the union with the One.

151 See notes 94–95.

152 H.J. Blumenthal, *Plotinus' Psychology*, 1–7; *ibidem*, 'Soul and Intellect', 82–104, 83, 92; Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 27–32; S.R.L. Clark, 'Plotinus: Body and Soul', *CCP*, 282–288; Atkinson, *Plotinus Enneads* v.1, 42, 62–64; Emilsson, *Intellect*, 176–191.

4.6 *The 'Failure' and 'Descent' of the Intellect*

C. Tornau articulates certain important points concerning Plotinus' depiction of the divine Intellect which should be kept in mind in the upcoming section on the union with the One. He points out that in *Enn.* v.4.2, the divine Intellect is depicted as achieving an intellection of the One by allowing itself to be formed by the One.¹⁵³ But in a later treatise (III.8.8.30–end and III.8.11.23), Plotinus stresses the Νοῦς' unity at its formation by virtue of its 'in-plurality' of the intelligible Forms. According to Tornau, Plotinus implies in the latter the Νοῦς' failure to see the One.¹⁵⁴ In other words, the inchoate, potential Intellect ('sight not yet seeing') becomes actual intellectual vision, not by seeing the One, but by seeing something else instead: the intelligible world which is none other than itself. Tornau argues that this is the point behind Plotinus' talk of the Νοῦς wishing, desiring and 'looking at' in the passages above. Intellect is precisely what it is because there exists within itself a desire to see its source which remains inevitably eternally unfulfilled. This obstacle is the effect of τόλμα, its striving to become autonomous from its source (at the actualization of the Intellect as Thought, Being and Life). It is thereafter unable to unite with the One because the One is beyond all Being and Thought, which is totally beyond itself.

Another passage which supports Tornau's observations is the following: '... but before this, it (LZ: Intellect) is only desire and unformed sight. So this Intellect had an immediate apprehension of the One, but by grasping it, it became Intellect, perpetually in need (LZ: of the One).' (v.3.11.13–14). It appears that Plotinus again slipped out of consistency here: elsewhere he posited that the Νοῦς was entirely without need.¹⁵⁵ Scattered throughout the *Enneads*, we can find other short statements or subtle nuanced passages which suggest weaknesses of the Intellect.¹⁵⁶

153 C. Tornau, 'The Background of Augustine's Triadic Epistemology in *De Trinitate* 11–15, A Suggestion', in: E. Bermon and G. O'Daly (eds.) *Le De Trinitate de Saint Augustine Exégèse, logique et noétique* (Paris, 2012) 251–266, 261.

154 See also on the same topic: Emilsson, *Intellect*, 73; Armstrong comments on this failure: 'Intellect only constitutes itself as Intellect because it eternally falls short in its endeavor to reach the One and therefore is perpetually in need of and perpetually desires the One.' (In reference to: καὶ ἐφιέμενος ἀεὶ καὶ ἀεὶ τυγχάνων: *Enn.* III.8.11.23–24) [Armstrong, *Enneads*, vol. v (at v.3.11.15) 110].

155 Plotinus seemed to suggest that true love—love in intellect—was not an appetitive love and thus has no need, e.g., *Enn.* VI.9.9.44–50, v.3.10.50–end; Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, 76–86, 183.

156 Examples: the unfulfilled desire of the Νοῦς: (VI.7.32.27–30 and VI.7.33.11); the experience of the One is so intense that the soul desires to love even beyond the One, if that were possible (VI.7.22.20); love has a defective nature: due to its lack of definition and limits (of

Tornau's observation helps to illuminate an utmost relevant aspect regarding Plotinus' depiction of the relationship of the *Noûs* to the One. Parallel to Plotinus' descriptions of the difficulties of the soul which neutralize his position of the divine human intellect, this insight shows that Plotinus also neutralizes his many accounts of the ascent to the One which have the same 'unproblematic character' as his accounts of the human intellect ascending to the *Noûs*. That is, in other contexts in the *Enneads*, Plotinus admits that the ascent requires overcoming almost unsurmountable difficulties.

In this section we have dealt with Plotinus' account of the ascent to the Intellect by means of acquiring certain kinds of knowledge. Yet other aspects are involved in the epistemological ascent as well, such as the attraction of beauty, desire and love: 'First the soul will come in its ascent to intellect and there, will know the Forms, all beautiful and will affirm that these, the Ideas, are beauty; for all things are beautiful by these, by the products of intellect and essence ...' (*Enn.* 1.6.9.34–37). At this note, we move on to the next section, which deals with Plotinus' doctrine of Ἔρως and how one through the force of love and desire is elevated from the *Noûs* to the One.

4.7 *To the One: the Ascent by Beauty and Love*

4.7.1 Introduction

Plotinus identifies the ultimate source of Love with the first Hypostasis, the One and the Good. In doing so, he applies a triad of love to the One: 'And he (LZ: the One) that same self, is lovable and love and love of himself in that he is beautiful and from himself and in himself.' VI.8.15.1–5.¹⁵⁷ Ἔρως indeed ultimately derives from the One, yet Plotinus explains, this love is best described as not being the One itself (as the One cannot have predicates: *Enn.* VI.7.38) but rather as the experience of the One, as by the *Noûs* (or *νοûς*) when turned to the

which one is unconscious) and its lack of satisfaction (III.5.7.7–26); difficulties in seeing the One: V.5.10.

157 Καὶ ἐράσμιον καὶ ἔρως ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ αὐτοῦ ἔρως, ἅτε οὐκ ἄλλως καλὸς ἢ παρ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ. Pigler comments that this quote represents an exceptional affirmative discourse by Plotinus concerning the One (*Plotin, l'amour*, 27). Note the activity of self-love in the One: here the subject and object are one, which is characteristic of the *Noûs* as we saw in the context of knowledge and self-knowledge.

This triad is discussed in Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, 105–107; Pigler, *Plotin, l'amour*, 27–36; C. Tornau, 'Does Love Make Us Beautiful? A Criticism of Plotinus in Augustine's Tractates on the first Epistle of John', *Millennium* 4 (1) 93–105, 97; *ibidem*, 'Eros versus Agape? Von Plotins Eros zum Liebesbegriff Augustins', *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft* 112 (2005) 271–291, 279–280; F.M. Schroeder, *Form and Transformation, A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Montreal, 1992) 105–107.

One. As depicted in the section on the ascent by knowledge, the Νοῦς became what it is by longing to know its source and prior to this turning, it was the loving or desiring Intellect.¹⁵⁸ Subsequently Νοῦς became the Thinking Intellect. Thus the human ascent to the One involves the same activities as the Νοῦς in becoming, yet in reverse-starting from the self-awareness of being attuned to pure Thought to becoming total desire and love. Thus Plotinus' notion of love can be defined as the force of attraction originating from the One, radiated to the realms under it which serves as an impulse for the human mind to return to its ultimate source. Although we are dealing here primarily with the term Ἔρως, Plotinus uses other synonyms as well which are translated to English as love and basically have the same signification, such as *philia* (φιλία) and ἀγάπη.¹⁵⁹

Plotinus describes Ἔρως in three main treatises in the *Enneads*.¹⁶⁰ The main treatise which will be mostly used for this exposition is VI.7, which will also be referred to often in Chapter 8 in the comparison with Augustine's exposition of love in *Trin.* VIII–X. The treatises on Ἔρως depict how the forces of longing for and loving beauty impel the consciousness to rise from the human sense level and ultimately to an intimate, individual unification. The ascent is also depicted as becoming the image (εἰκών-often denoted by 'trace' ἵχνος)¹⁶¹ as the soul progressively gains resemblance to that what is above it: the Intellect and the One, in the actualization of the 'true self'. This exposition will begin with Plotinus' descriptions of the force of love as desire; first on the human level which elevates upwards to the perception of the Forms in the Intellect and then to the experience of the One.

158 On the desiring, loving and thinking Νοῦς: e.g., *Enn.* III.8.11.20, VI.7.35.20–28.

159 E.g., different conjunctions of ἀγαπᾶν are used in VI.7.28. See also ἀγαπητός in *Lexicon Plotinianum* 10–12; See Rist, *Eros, Psyche*, 183, 76–86. The ἀγάπη referred to here is a veritable ἔρως (Pigler, *Plotin l'amour*, 28). *Lexicon Plotinianum* on ἔρως: 430–431.

160 III.5; *On Eros the God of Love*; VI.7: *The Forms and The Good* and in VI.5: *The Presence of Being Everywhere* chapter 10. In the treatise III.5 *On Eros the God of Love*, Plotinus interprets the birth of the Ἔρως from Plato's *Symposium* (brought forth by the intercourse of Poverty and Plenty). Plotinus reconciles Plato's works *Phaedrus* and *The Symposium* by distinguishing the Love who is a god from the love who is a δαίμων and from the love which is an affection of the soul. What is useful for us here is Ἔρως as link between the soul and the divine (III.5.2). In that sense, Ἔρως is the medium between the subject who desires and the desired object.

Other important passages are VI.5.10; VI.7.14.22, 30–32; and VI.9.9–10. In treatise VI.5.10, love is described as desire for the totality of the One. The treatise VI.7 also contains much information on the notion of Ἔρως as desire to ascend to the One, loving the Forms, the Intellect, Beauty and Good; as well as on ecstasy. In the treatise VI.9 *On the Good or the One*, chapters 9–10, Plotinus describes love for the One, as leaving everything behind, becoming the true self while uniting with the One.

161 VI.7.9–10 and 17; VI.7.18.1–5.

4.7.2 "Ερως is Desire

'The individual souls certainly have an intelligent desire consisting in the impulse to return to itself springing from the principle from which they came into being ...' (*Enn.* IV.8.4.1).¹⁶² For Plotinus, love begins with a strong desire to unite with something which is purely good and beautiful.¹⁶³ He believes that all things express desire and that all desire is desire for the Good, or for what is better: 'the birth pangs of longing bear witness that there is some good for each.' (VI.7.26.10). Plotinus describes many kinds of desire which entail different kinds of love: for example, that which the human soul directs to the opposite direction of the Good and Beautiful which consequently, by definition, is ugly and bad (VI.7.27–28). At the opposite spectrum of Good, he accentuates, the neediest of all exists: matter; it seeks goodness in form because the archetypal Form is what makes something lovable (VI.7.33–35). There is a desire or love which tends to ascend yet it is usually mixed, for example with sense perception, passion (πάθος), a sickness of the soul or the love which was invoked by a demon. Then there is the love which is God which is purely unphysical (III.5.7). The division between these desires is contingent on the appetite for sense stimulation and the appetite for reason and thought.¹⁶⁴ Plotinus depicts the soul's love as a kind of radical incompleteness, a permanent incapacity to be satisfied, due to the 'material' element in it.¹⁶⁵ Love always has a need for something

162 See also III.5; I.6. The term ἔρως is thus synonymous with the terms he uses to express 'desire' such as ἔφρεσις, πόθος, ὀρεξις, and ὁρμή. R. Arnou, *Le désir de Dieu dans la philosophie de Plotin: contribution à l'histoire des idées religieuses aux premiers siècles de l'ère chrétienne* (Paris, 1923) 53–66. Plotinus' usage of these terms is variable; the differences are nuanced and sometimes negligible. Arnou explains these in more detail.

163 'Now about the affection of soul for which we make love responsible, there is no one, I suppose, who does not know that it occurs in souls which desire to embrace some beauty and this desire has two forms: one which comes from the chaste who are akin to absolute beauty and one which wants to find fulfillment in the doing of some ugly act. And if someone assumed that the origin of love was the longing for beauty itself which was there in men's souls, and their recognition of it and kinship with it and unreasoned awareness that it is something of their own, he would hit, I think, on the truth about its cause. For the ugly is opposed to nature and to God.' (III.5.1.9–19).

164 Ἐπιθυμία is a kind of love grounded in the body (e.g., IV.8.2, IV.4.20). Βούλησις is a desire for the Good, the desire for things reasonable, immaterial and spiritual (e.g., VI.8.6). See Arnou, *Le désir*, 57–58. Desire acts as an intermediary as well (*Enn.* VI.2.21, VI.8.18). Rist describes how ἔρως is 'non-appetitive, but creative of being.' (*Eros and Psyche*, 76–86, 183).

165 III.5.7.4–17. Plotinus' is interpreting Plato's story of Poverty and Plenty who bring forth the god ἔρως. Poverty represents intelligible matter, Plenty, intelligible reality: 'Poverty had intercourse with an intelligible nature, not merely with an image of the intelligible or an imagination derived from it, but she was there in the intelligible and united with it and

greater and beyond (VI.7.22). 'And as long as there is anything higher than that which is present to it, it naturally goes on upwards, lifted by the giver of its love.' (VI.7.22.20).¹⁶⁶ Armstrong explains Plotinus' conception that Ἔρως is not just a desire which disappears with satisfaction but something which persists even when the lover attains full fruition and union with the beloved.¹⁶⁷

4.7.3 Ἔρως as Human Love

Plotinus teaches that love is light and that the soul is awakened by the light in beauty.¹⁶⁸ The light which a person can perceive on the sense level at the beginning of the ascent is weak, merely the outset of the immense light which one will love. If we love, it is because something in the object seems indefinable which surpasses its physical beauty that attracts us. Plotinus describes this 'something' as Ἔρως, a life, a brilliance or grace¹⁶⁹ which makes itself desirable and without which, beauty would be cold and inert (VI.7.22 and 24). Thus love experienced on the physical sense level encompasses a presentiment of infinity of that which surpasses all Form and Thought.¹⁷⁰ If one were aware, Plotinus says, that the object of one's love is truly that which is without form, one would

bore the substance of Love made from form and indefiniteness, the indefiniteness which the soul had before it attained the Good, while it was divining that there was something there by an indefinite, unlimited imagination. Therefore, since a rational principle came to be in something which was not rational, but an indefinite impulse and an obscure expression, what it produced was something not complete or sufficient, but defective, since it came into being from an indefinite impulse and a sufficient rational principle. So Love is not a pure rational principle, since he has in himself an indefinite, irrational, unbounded impulse; for he will never be satisfied as long as he has in him the nature of the indefinite.' See Armstrong on this remarkable passage (*Enneads* III, 190–191).

166 Armstrong comments that this passage is the clearest statement made by Plotinus that our desire to return to the Good is given by the Good (*Enneads* VII, 157).

167 Armstrong, *Enneads* III, 182.

168 VI.7.22, 26–end; V.3.17.15–40. On Plotinus' experiences of the ascent to Light, see notes 133 and 182.

169 On the Greek term: χάρις ('grace or charm') in Plotinus: the beauty of a facade perceived through the senses is not the result of attractiveness of the thing in itself (as in its symmetry or colors) but rather because of the inner χάρις. This is communicated by the One, the Good (throughout *Enn.* VI.7) (Hadot, *Simplicité*, 76–79). The term 'grace' connotes a mysterious attraction endowed by the divine which arouses desire in the beholder.

A few notes of interest: the Greek term χάρις in a Christian context can also be translated as 'grace' (e.g., Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 1:5) translated into Latin as *gratia* and *caritas* 'charity'. Augustine mentions that Porphyry espouses a notion of grace *gratia* (*Civ. Dei* X.29). He may have meant χάρις—as in the favor of the gods—, yet it was not likely that his doctrine was similar to Augustine's doctrine of grace. Gillian Clark, 'Augustine's Porphyry', in: G. Karamanolis, A. Shepard, (eds.) *Studies on Porphyry* (London, 2007) 127–140, 135.

170 Hadot, *Simplicité*, 75.

directly desire the highest principle, the Good. Love is of a substantial nature (III.5.3–4, 7), existing in the Godhead and in the individual soul as well.¹⁷¹

The experience of Plotinus' Ἔρως also begins on the level of human love or what two lovers experience, which is to some extent analogous to love for the divine.¹⁷² Yet, being captivated by the physical beauty of a person—the form in sense objects τύποι—is not the fullest kind of love which can be realized.¹⁷³ Plotinus asks, why are we then taken by this kind of love? If an object is simply beautiful, is beauty not enough to explain love? (*Enn.* VI.7.33.22). No, because on a higher level of consciousness, one desires to see the object loved in the vision of the Form. Thus after departing from the sense impressions, the soul should visualize the universal, beautiful and incorporeal Form of what it desires. The soul should focus on the non-corporeal form of love and 'seek to see the beloved that he may water him when withering' (VI.7.33.26). Ἔρως moves the lover beyond human love because human love is merely an image of true love (VI.9.9.39–47)—a reflection of true love which the Good infuses into the soul. When the One appears, human love will disappear.

4.7.4 Ἔρως Rising to the Intellect and Forms

Ἔρως urges the soul to desire to see the Forms more clearly so that one's love becomes intensified and truer.

When anyone, therefore, sees this light, then truly he is also moved to the Forms and longs for the light which plays upon them and delights in it,

¹⁷¹ 'But if what keeps company (LZ: the subject) is one with what it keeps company with (LZ: the object) and what is (LZ: Being), in a way, desiring is one with the object of desire, and the object of desire is on the side of existence and a kind of substrate (ὑπόστασιν), again it has become apparent to us that the desire and the substance (οὐσία) are the same.' VI.8.15.5–10. This passage demonstrates Plotinus' position that love is a substance. It seems here that he is identifying the One with Being and Substance; yet Being and Substance as well as the unity of the subject with its object are characteristics more appropriate for the Intellect. In other passages in VI.8., such as in the following chapter, Plotinus assures us that the One is beyond Substance and Intellect. In this book he is intricately describing the dependent relationship of the Intellect to the One, implying that the borders between two are vague.

¹⁷² VI.7.34.5–16; IV.4.2.27–28; VI.9.9.39.

¹⁷³ See also I.3 *On Dialectic*, Plotinus' interpretation of Plato's theory of dialectic from *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* (which contains some alterations). Here Plotinus describes three types of human beings in the context of love. The third type advocates the philosophic ideal: philosophers do not need to pass through the intermediary of human love. The philosopher needs only to be guided by sciences and virtues via dialectic to the ascent to the One. However, III.5 does in fact deal more with personal human love than in other treatises.

just as with the bodies here below, our desire is not for the underlying material things but for the beauty imaged upon them. For each is what it is by itself; but it becomes desirable when the Good colours it, giving a kind of grace to them and passionate love (ἔρωσ) to the desirers. Then the soul, receiving into itself an outflow from thence, is moved and dances wildly and is all stung with longing and becomes love.¹⁷⁴

VI.7.22.1–10

The spectacle of divine Love and Beauty in the world of Forms attracts the soul with shimmering and awesome grace χάρις derived from the One (VI.7.22.21). This inexplicable attraction of beauty is bound to Life, as in the true Life and Being of the intelligible world. In the consciousness of the intellect, the soul enflames with love and the birth of true love takes place. 'For there in the realm of the Intellect is true delight and the greatest satisfaction, the most loved and longed for, which is not in the process of becoming or movement, but its cause is what colors and shines upon and glorifies the intelligibles.' (VI.7.30.30–32). The divine Intellect is attractive to the human soul on account of its close proximity to the Good (which the Intellect images), and because of its awe-inspiring Beauty and Love. Plotinus asserts that longing is what initially conceives thinking (V.6.5). One longs for knowledge because one yearns to contemplate God more fully and because contemplation in itself is the goal (III.8.5–7). As is evident here, the experience of love in the Intellect and the contemplation of Ideas described here differ considerably from Plotinus' more serene descriptions of the ascent in the context of his epistemology.

The experience of love in the realm of the Intellect is a foreshadowing of the soul's *unio mystica* with the One. Its experience in Intellect is a reflection of the Νοῦς when it came into being from the One. In its pre-intellectual, indistinct and undetermined phase, it desired to know its source. By turning to the One, the Νοῦς was touched by the One and became drunk—as by nectar—with love and joy at this immediate contact (VI.7.35.24–25). In falling in love, the Νοῦς went out of its mind as it were, carried off, lifted up passively by the One.¹⁷⁵ In the second phase—in the unfolding of the Νοῦς—the Intellect became aware of itself, of its multiplicity and totality of the Forms. From that moment on, the Νοῦς could only know the One in no other way than through an intellectual experience, in the duality of object and subject, in the multiplicity of Forms. Recall from the previous section the descent of the Νοῦς at its inception and its

¹⁷⁴ VI.7.22.1–22.

¹⁷⁵ *Enn.* VI.7.36.15–20, 19.

'failure' to reach the One. In the state of loving the One, it knew that it still had its thinking, yet it was also aware that it was not thinking now (VI.7.35.30). In a parallel manner, Plotinus depicted the human intellect as understanding itself as an image or trace of the Νοῦς, imitating the Intellect's amorous and ecstatic contemplation of the One (the Loving Intellect), while at the same time fascinated by the divine Life and Thought in itself (the Thinking Intellect).

4.7.5 "Ἐρως Beyond the Intellect

"Ἐρως, as a dynamic movement which desires union with the perceived beauty, is eventually not truly gratified at the level of Intellect.¹⁷⁶ The soul is primarily moved unconsciously by love for the Good (VI.7.15–25).¹⁷⁷ When the Beauty of the thinking Intellect and of the Form fills the human intellect with love, it realizes that it was due to the fact that this Beauty resembled the first Hypostasis, the Good (VI.7.15.9).

But when a kind of warmth from thence (LZ: the divine Intellect) comes upon it, it gains strength and wakes and is truly winged; and though it is moved by passion for that which lies close by it, yet all the same it rises higher, to something greater which it seems to remember. And as long as there is anything higher than that which is present to it, it naturally goes on upwards, lifted by the giver of its love (LZ: the One, the Good). It rises above the Intellect, but cannot run on above the Good, for there is nothing above it.

VI.7.22.15–22

Progressively the soul increases in likeness (ὁμοίότης) of the divine, first of the Intellect, then of the One. Plotinus says that a person can prepare himself for receiving the One and the truest love by resembling the One: making oneself as inwardly beautiful as possible. In doing so, one temporarily discards not only the earthly, historical self but essentially the entire region of the rational soul: all discourse and intellectual vision. This is naturally the most difficult part: disposing of the two most important human 'selves', including what had been the 'true, immaterial self'.

176 Pigler's correct comments that 'Dans la métaphysique de Plotin, l'amour est donc toujours supérieur à la pensée. Comme l'Un lui-même est hypernoësis.' (*Plotin, l'amour*, 198).

177 Unconscious love for the Good is suggested in VI.7.31.20, 30–35. Armstrong remarks on the latter: 'Here, as in V.5.12, the unperceived presence and unconscious love of the Good are prior to the conscious recollection of the beauty of the World of Forms aroused by the beauties here.' (*Enneads* VII, 183).

Plotinus describes the soul united with Intellect, desiring infinite love and experiencing the One as ‘suddenly appearing’.¹⁷⁸ Armstrong makes an interesting comment pertaining to this: ‘The suddenness and unexpectedness of the final vision is an important feature of Plotinus’ descriptions. It is not something one can plan for and bring about when one wishes.’¹⁷⁹ In complete union with the One, there is nothing between the soul and the One, they are both one, no longer two. Two lovers in the world below imitate this in their will and desire to be united in the ecstasy¹⁸⁰ of their consummation (VI.7.31).¹⁸¹ The One’s amorous ecstasy with Νοῦς is what the Νοῦς instilled in the human soul: which effectuated the birth of love in the soul. When true love is born in the soul, it will always desire to return to its absolute origin. In the One, the soul attains the final experience of reality—the soul becomes most ‘real’—truer than it was in the Νοῦς, the self of an ultra-transcendent and infinite nature.¹⁸² The One itself is beyond Thought, Self-thinking and Substance. The human experience of the One is, like that of the Νοῦς, only momentary¹⁸³ and not a definite unification (VI.7.34–35). It results in better judgment of reality and truth, becoming conscious of what one truly desires, of one’s love for God and the importance of selflessness. Plotinus describes the aftermath of the ascent to

178 Plotinus is not entirely consistent in his portrayal of how the soul encounters the One. ‘He (LZ: the One) does not look to them but they to him, but he is, if we may say so, born to his own interior, as it were well pleased (ἀγαπήσας) with himself, the pure radiance being himself, this with which he is well pleased.’ VI.8.16.12–14. Plotinus does speak of the One coming to the soul in v.5.8 and v.3.17. See Armstrong, ‘Plotinus a Magician?’, 73–79.

179 *Enneads*, V, 135; note referring to VI.7.36.18–19.

180 The union with the One is described only once as an experience of ἔκστασις in *Enn.* VI.9.10. Armstrong’s insight is indispensable here: he comments that Plotinus’ describing the mystical union as ‘ecstasy’ gives a misleading impression of this otherwise quiet, austere mysticism (*Enneads* VII, 342–343).

181 See also *Enn.* IV.4.2.27–28.

182 This experience is also depicted as an experience of Light (v.5.7.33). Hadot explains Plotinus’ view that all vision is light and light is vision—there is no difference in this respect to inner or outer light. The mystical experience is nothing but light—and not effectuated by one’s own force (VI.7.36.17; v.3.17.28). The soul’s goal is to touch this light: to see this light by this light, not through a light from someone or somewhere else, but the light which illuminates oneself. How this can be realized? Discard everything! (Hadot, *Simplicité*, 104–106).

183 Suggested in *Enn.* v.5.7.24. See Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustine*, 67–75 on the instantaneous nature of both Augustine’s and Plotinus’ depictions of the ascent. Scholarly opinions vary as to whether Plotinus intended to advocate dissolving (or destroying) the self completely. Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 15–19. See note 90 for resources on Plotinus’ notion of self. Remes gives a nuanced view on this in *Self*, 239–257. Remes’ comments are correct, I believe, when she says that the experience of the Intellect and the One essentially entails a kind of gradual rebirth of the human being. Uniting with the One occurs rarely yet it would incur a drastic transformation of perspective.

the One: the descent as the feeling of contempt for the Intellect and Forms, everything which was once marveled at is now despised as being inferior. Subsequently the soul becomes again what it had been before; distinguished from the moments of when it was blissful (vi.7.35). Plotinus does not envision limits on desire and love—even at the One, he says, the soul wishes to drive forward and expand further. There may be two degrees in Plotinus' account of the transcendent mystic experience, that on the level of the *Noûs* and that of the One. Yet there is only one movement, the movement to the One, from which the soul should view all reality.

4.8 *Synthesis of Plotinus' Account of the Ascent: Love and Knowledge*

Behind all desires and loves is the singular love for the Good, the desire to ascend to the Good and experience the unification with the ultimate principle. In order to come to the One, one must first go through the rational soul, discursive thinking and then to the intellect. The soul longs to completely actualize itself as intellect *νοῦς* and therefore, it loves knowledge, in particular, true knowledge (vi.7). True knowledge and true love are beyond discursive reasoning and acquired by a gradual process of contemplating the Ideas in the divine *Noûs*, acquiring a fuller insight into the intelligible world. In a more profound sense, by means of a continuous purification of all things material in the soul, it fulfills its longings to become one with the divine Intellect. Yet it knows instinctively or unconsciously that beyond Intellect, there is something more which is indescribable and incomprehensible to the human mind, the One, which is singular and far from the world of multiplicity. It is not enough to know that these two divine realms exist, the point is to raise one's consciousness to these levels and experience in oneself two different tones of spiritual life (*Noûs* and the One). "Ἐρως is thus a divine impetus which drives one to seek knowledge, but also that which takes the thinking mind beyond itself—from the *Noûs*' self-orientation towards the Intellect's yearning to return to the One. The ultimate experience of the One entails a momentary experience of intense emotion and a temporary loss of self. Afterwards, the love and knowledge experienced or attained on lower levels of existence will never be truly gratifying.

The rational soul and intellect is aware of its differentiation from the Self of the divine *Noûs*. Its contemplation of its own ideas cannot measure up to that of the *Noûs* and as such, it does not encompass an immediate or complete attainment of perfection. Plotinus' doctrine of the human intellect regarding its divinity and destiny to ultimately unite to its source, to the One, is full of paradoxes. The reader begins to wonder at his idealistic accounts of an essentially—at least for the present—unattainable ascent. All in all, Plotinus believes firmly in the possibility of encountering true divinity in the form of Light, Beauty

and Love within one's own soul. He posits that this only occurs by actualizing the intellect. The divine Intellect makes this actualization possible by pulling the soul upwards, who consciously and willingly desires it and makes efforts to purify herself. The One pulls the (fortunate) intellect further upwards in a kind of flash experience of indescribable and singular reality.

Plotinus informs us that these are accounts of his personal experiences which are difficult to put into words (VI.9.11). Taking into consideration that Plotinus had only been in union with the One four times and his student Porphyry much fewer,¹⁸⁴ one could conclude that the experience in its totality as described here is beyond the attainment of the majority of seekers or reserved only for the lucky few. At the most, souls will attain a momentary intuitive glimpse of the higher spheres of the perfect unity of Self-referencing of the divine Intellect of powerful intensity, as a flight from normal consciousness. It is likewise questionable as to whether Plotinus intended the full actualization of human intellect in perfect imitation of the *Noûs* to be the only means to total redemption. How would he have regarded a person without this experience, who lived a completely sinless and virtuous physical life?

Yet the knowledge of Plotinus' experiences would have been useful and worthwhile enough for his students. The prospect of the union and fulfillment of all desires in the divine lends one's own contemplation all the more significance and appeal. Plotinus' accounts of the ascent stimulated awareness of the primal drives in a human being, which ultimately find their greatest meaning and fulfillment at the highest level of the divine. Attuning our love and desire to this can culminate in an increasingly harmonious relationship with the whole of reality. This goal encompassed many paradoxes, such as obtaining autarky, while resting in complete dependence on the Goodness and Love of primeval origin. At the same time, by making themselves good and virtuous, they could become happier persons. It would not make sense that Plotinus would recommend his students to turn their backs on other humans, society or world. He himself was very social and among his students in his school in Rome there were many senators.¹⁸⁵

184 *The Life of Plotinus*, 23.16–17: vol. 1 in Armstrong's translation, 3–87.

185 Among Plotinus' hearers were senators and many women. Even Emperor Gallienus and his wife venerated him (*The Life of Plotinus*, 7).

Augustine: the Image of God in His Genesis Commentaries

1 Introduction

Plotinus demonstrated in his cosmology how the human soul was connected to God in its highest region. The lower parts of the soul were connected to the physical body in some way to the exterior world and visual images (particulars of the divine intelligible world). The latter factors influenced one's self-consciousness and brought about a certain mode of (discursive) thinking in which these material images were processed into knowledge. He portrayed the human soul as an image of the divine All-Soul whose potential it was to image the Intellect and the One. The highest part of the soul, the intellect, with its particular mode of consciousness, perception and thought was in Plotinus' philosophy, in particular, the gateway to a deeper understanding of human and divine realities. The development of this consciousness bore with it mankind's teleology: deliverance from the unstable, death oriented and always changing physical world, towards a truer and immortal existence, by becoming one with the eternal Godhead and becoming godlike. Augustine's variation on the above teleology is depicted in his exegesis of Genesis 1:26, his doctrine of the image of God, which, like that of Plotinus, is embedded in his cosmology, or in Augustine's case, his doctrine of creation in his Genesis commentaries.

To facilitate the evaluation of how Augustine made use of many Plotinian concepts, the expositions in this chapter will mirror the structural line of the preceding chapter on Plotinus. It commences with a succinct summary of Augustine's doctrine of creation (section 2) in which his doctrine of the image of God is embedded. The creation act is effectuated by the second Trinitarian person, the Word of God or pre-existent Christ, in whom the eternal creation principles exist. Thus both aspects intricately involve Augustine's theory of Ideas and images. The focus here will then turn to Augustine's doctrine of the soul (section 3) as human image of Christ, its major components, such as the intellect, in which, as in the exposition of Plotinus' psychology, the relationship of the human image to the Ideas are accentuated. This relationship will be delineated further in section 4 on the ascent to God by means of contemplating the Ideas.

But first, a few preliminary words on Augustine's cosmology, his exegesis of the creation story in Genesis. His exegesis was attempted in at least five different major works which he wrote within a period of thirty years.¹ For our purposes here, *Gen. litt.* is the most appropriate.² Completed between 401 and 416,³ this work serves as his most extensive attempt at a 'literal interpretation' of Genesis.⁴ It contains his complete doctrine of creation and also his most extensive elaboration of his exegesis of Gen. 1:26–27 up until *De Trinitate*. It also serves as a forerunner for the latter where this doctrine is most elaborated.

Augustine's theory of Ideas is mentioned in different contexts in *Gen. litt.* but it is never completely explained, as if he expected his readers to automatically grasp what he meant by 'eternal principles' etc. We can therefore make more sense of his theory when we consult his *De Ideis*.⁵ This short essay is unique for a number of reasons. First of all, because it gives a condensed overview of this crucial aspect in Augustine's creation doctrine, the causal Forms or Ideas. In no other work does he treat the Ideas so extensively as here. It is also unique, due to the fact that no other antique author, whether philosopher or theolo-

- 1 *Gen. adu. Man.* (388–389); *Gen. litt. imperf.* (393–394); books XI–XIII of *Conf.* (397–401); *Gen. litt.* (401–416), book XI of *Civ. Dei* (approx. 416). When Augustine returned to Thagaste from Rome and Milan in 388, he wrote his first exegesis of Genesis which was primarily intended to refute the Manichaeans and their rejection of the Old Testament. Dissatisfied with his result, he began a new exegesis of Genesis and produced a work which likewise gave him no satisfaction (*Gen. litt. imperf.*). In both works, he treated the *imago Dei* (Gen. 1:26–27) but more so in *imperfectus*. It was not until later in his life that he wrote *Gen. litt.* in twelve books (this was in the middle and later phases of his life), the result of which he claimed himself content. This work represented his most extensive exposition on Gen. 1:26 up until that time. His most extensive elaboration is contained in *Trin.* VII–XV.
- 2 *De genesi ad litteram libri duodecim, Bibliothèque Augustinienne. Œuvres de Saint Augustin* BA 48 and 49 *La Genèse au sens littéral en douze livres (I–VII)*. Translation, Introduction and Notes by P. Agaësse et A. Solignac (Paris, 1972); *The Literal Meaning of Genesis, St. Augustine*; translation from the Latin, annotated by J.H. Taylor (New York, 1982) vol. 1 and 2, *CSEL* 28 1.1–435; On how *Gen. litt.* relates to his other commentaries on creation, see E. Hill, *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees, Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis, The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Introductions by M. Fiedrowicz; translation and notes by E. Hill (New York, 2000).
- 3 He was between 47 and 63 years of age. Hill, *On Genesis*, 164: 'The composition occupied him more than about 15 years. There is a disagreement as to whether he began the work in 399 or 401 or 404. It was published in 416.'
- 4 Ultimately his interpretation is not literal as the title promises. It would be more fitting to deem many of his interpretations as allegorical. See Chapter 12: 'Epilogue'.
- 5 *Div. qu.* 46: *De Ideis; Saint Augustine Eighty-Three Different Questions*, translated by D.L. Mosher (Washington D.C., 1982); BA 10: *Opusculi x. Mélanges Doctrinaux*, texte de l'Édition Bénédictine. Introductions, translation and Notes: G. Bardy, J.-A. Beckaert, J. Boutet (Paris, 1952) 123–129. The date of *Div. qu.* is not certain, around 394–395. [Chronology: P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo, A Biography* (London, 2000)].

gian, devoted so much attention to the subject of the Ideas, their definition and the origin of the concept, in spite of the fact that the theory of Ideas of Plato was well known and widely accepted in antiquity. Of interest here is the essay's highlighting of the soul's ascent through the contemplation of the Ideas, a component of his doctrine of the image of God.

Gen. litt. is seminal for this study for a number of other reasons. Here Augustine is concerned with the interpretation of the first three chapters of the account of God's work in the six days of creation up until the sin of Adam and Eve to their expulsion from Eden. How the creation of man, particularly of the human soul, fits into the creation act as described in Genesis relates directly to his interpretation of the image of God. Additionally, these particular aspects in *Gen. litt.* reveal interesting convergences and divergences with Plotinian thought.

Of this work itself, Augustine says in his *Retractationes* that it contains more *quaesita* than *inventa* and of the *inventa* only a few are *firmata*.⁶ In the words of R. O'Connell: 'It is not easy to ferret out Augustine's unsettled opinions in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. Nothing is more certain than his uncertainties at a number of points.'⁷ The aporetic and convoluted character of this work has to do to some extent with Augustine's attitude towards exegesis of the Old Testament. He remarks that it is not his intention to impose his own individual interpretation of the divine Word as being the one and only correct interpretation. He wishes to demonstrate in this work the virtues of the written Word itself, that it is too powerful for the human mind to fathom it in a single reading. The obscure passages of the bible, he adds, were written intentionally to stimulate our thought.⁸ This means that in several books of this work Augustine grapples with his doctrine of soul, discussing at least three or four different themes at the same time, some, a continuation of certain discussions from previous chapters, while others are added.⁹ His explanation is full of many detours and it is not always easy to filter out his conclusions on the soul.¹⁰ Hence the

6 *Retractationes* XXIV.24.

7 See R.J. O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in Augustine's Later Works* (New York, 1987) 202.

8 *Gen. litt.* I.1, I.19.38, 21–41; VII.28, 42–43 (Hill).

9 One of the intertwining themes here is Augustine's probing for an exegetical justification for the words in Genesis: 'And so it was done' and to repeat thereafter, 'And God made ...' and why in the Scriptures these expressions do not seem to occur when referring to the creation of light or of humans. I am omitting this and other discussions from this exposition because of their lack of relevance for Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei*.

10 As noted above, I will be skimming over the broad range of questions concerning the numerous hypotheses which Augustine probed throughout the twelve books of *Gen. litt.* and often found no satisfying solution. Instead I gladly refer to R. O'Connell's excellent

pondering nature of the work, as well as some inconsistencies evident in his doctrine of the soul, make this a tedious study object. It is no wonder that many researchers skip over *Gen. litt.* for studying Augustine's interpretation of the image of God. An adequate description of his doctrine of the *imago Dei* (and even his theory of Ideas) in *Gen. litt.* demands a great deal of 'ferreting out'. The following is the fruit of my labor.

2 Augustine's Doctrine of Creation: Ideas and Images

2.1 *The Word of God and the Creation of the World*

In the book of Genesis, the Creator is simply referred to as 'God'. Augustine's basis for his conception of the Creator was not just 'God', but the whole Holy Trinity; yet specifically so, the Son, the second Trinitarian Person or Christ.¹¹ The Creator was begotten when God the Father 'spoke' in the realm of eternity and thereby generated a Son, the Word of God.¹² The Word being eternally uttered

study above in which these multifaceted issues are untangled. A few examples: how did the soul come into the body from the spiritual region of the angels and Light and into a physical body in order to lead an individual life of its own? Could the soul possibly have been responsible for sinning before leading an individual life? What is the substance of the spiritual entity, soul, and what happens to this substance or matter when confronted with the physical matter of the human body which was evolved by the casual and seminal reasons? What exactly is the soul's relationship to the causal reasons? See also Teske, 'Soul', 807–812.

- 11 Christ as Creator has significance in the context of Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* in which the Word of God (essentially the Son of God who incarnated as Jesus Christ) re-forms or recreates the human soul. See section 3.2.1.

Christ is designated as Creator in the New Testament, e.g., John 1: 1–5 and Col. 1: 12–20. Van Bavel notes the three kinds of existence of Christ according to Augustine: 1. the pre-existent Son, God with God, 2. the historical Jesus and 3. the total Christ, i.e., Christ inclusive of all his followers as a 'Living Community' [*Van Liefde en Vriendschap* (Kampen, 1986) 96]. In many of Augustine's sermons, Christ is also seen as Creator, i.e., *Sermones* 184.3; 187.1 and 4; 188.2; 189.4; 194.3, 229H. E.g., 'He loved us so much that he became man though he had made man ...' (188.2). See also e.g., *Gen. litt. imperf.* 3.6; *Gen. litt.* states the connection of Jesus Christ 'as He who made us' less directly: I.2.6, I.4.9 and I.5.11. In *Trin.*, the terms Creator and Christ occur in the same context (e.g., IV.1.3, 3.5, 3.6, 4.7, 10.13 and 21.3; VI.1.1 and 9.10; VII.1.2, 3.4, 4.5 and 6.12). The direct correlation of *Christus* and *Creator* in Augustine's works is not always recognized in secondary literature. Many authors do recognize the term, i.e., C. Mayer, '*Creatio*', *A-L*, vol. 2, Fasc. 1/2, 71–72, 74. On the creation act by the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, see *Gen. litt.* I.6.12; *Gen. litt. imperf.* 16.61 as well as throughout *Trin.*

- 12 *Gen. litt.* I.2.6; I.4.9; I.5.11; *Gen. litt. imperf.* 5.19; *Conf.* XI.5.7, 6.8, and 7.9–end.

by the Father is the equivalent of the Son being eternally born of the Father, and so, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.¹³ The Word, the Son, is the ‘beginning’ (as in ‘In the beginning ...’: Latin: *in principio*) and the origin of all things. Augustine correlated the Creator God in Genesis to the first five verses of the Gospel of John: the Λόγος or Divine Word through which and in which all things were made. Augustine translated the divine Λόγος of John with the term: *Verbum Dei*.¹⁴

Our reply to these questions is that God made heaven and earth in the beginning, not in the beginning of time, but in Christ, since he was “the Word with the Father” through which and in which all things were made (John 1:1–3). Our Lord Jesus Christ, you see, on being questioned by the Jews about who he really was, answered, “The beginning, as which I am also speaking to you.” (John 8:25).¹⁵

Gen. adu. Man. 1.2.3

In Genesis, creation came to being when God spoke. Augustine interprets this as God’s Word, his Son, who in turn, created the world by ‘speaking’. ‘But when the Son speaks, the Father speaks, because in the speech of the Father, the Word, who is the Son, is uttered according to God’s eternal way ...’ (*Gen. litt.* 1.5.11). Here we see a baffling correspondence to Plotinus’ theogony in which the energy of the Λόγος brings forth the Intellect and the Soul—as utterances or images of the preceding deity. The difference here with Augustine’s *Verbum* is that although there is an implied hierarchy in the relationship between Father–Son, no such hierarchy in the divine Godhead truly exists.

2.2 *The Creator: Perfect Image and Source of the Ideas: Eternal Creation Principles*

By speaking, the *Verbum Dei* materialized the eternal Ideas (*Formae*) and reasons (*Rationes aeternae*) which existed in His mind. The Ideas, synonymous with Forms, Reasons or Types (*species*), were models for things in the universe.¹⁶ ‘The form (*ratio*) therefore, according to which a creature is created,

¹³ Explicated by Hill, *Trinity*, 172, note 5.

¹⁴ *Div. qu.* 63 *De Verbo*.

¹⁵ The English translations of Augustine’s commentaries on Genesis in this chapter are Hill’s unless otherwise specified.

¹⁶ *Div. qu.* 46: *De Ideis* (1): ‘... the Ideas are certain original and principal forms of things, i.e., reasons, fixed and unchangeable, which are not themselves formed and being thus eternal and existing always in the same state, are contained in the Divine Intelligence. And though

exists first in the Word of God before the actual creation work itself.¹⁷ Augustine integrates Christ into the creation story in Genesis by interpreting the words *in principio*, which he explains, do not refer to a temporal creation or even to the initiation of time (as the Ἐν ἀρχῇ of the Λόγος in John's Gospel), but to the creation principle itself, the origin of all things, the *Verbum Dei* or the ontological foundation of the universe.¹⁸ Therefore, Augustine designates the *Verbum* as the Form or Reason Principle.¹⁹ At the same time, Augustine emphasizes that Christ, *Verbum Dei*, the Son of God, is the most Perfect Image of the Father and completely equal to him (*Verbum similitudinis*). As the Father, He is eternal, immutable, transcendent and perfect.²⁰ God the Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit are one and in unison, they created the world. Augustine adds 'There is a kind of love in this activity ...' (*Gen. litt.* 1.5.11). This is an explicit reference to his doctrine of love in *Trin.*, of the love between the Father and Son which produced the Holy Spirit. (See Chapter 5.2.)

2.3 *Ontology*

Augustine saw the creation process, as did Plotinus, as divided roughly into two ontological realms: i. that of eternity and ii. of time and space, the latter of which is of matter, physicality and measurable dimensions.²¹ The world of time and space in which we live, is, according to Augustine, characterized by its

they themselves neither come into being and pass away ... everything which can come into being and pass away ... is said to be formed in accord with these ideas.' Ideas, *Formae* and reason principles *Rationes* are in fact distinct concepts yet they are indeed synonymous in Augustine's doctrine of creation and epistemology. *De Ideis*: (1) 'Hence in Latin we can call the ideas either "forms" (*formae*) or "species" (*species*), which are literal translations of the word. But if we call them "reasons" (*Rationes*), we obviously depart from a literal translation of the term, for "reasons" (*Rationes*) in Greek are called Λόγοι, not "ideas" (1.2: ἰδέαι). Yet, nonetheless, if anyone wants to use "reason" (*ratio*), he will not stray from the thing in question, for in fact, the ideas are certain original and principal forms of things, i.e., reasons, fixed and unchangeable, which are not themselves formed and, being thus eternal and existing always in the same state, are contained in the Divine Intelligence.' See below in the upcoming subsections and section 4. See also Zwollo, 'Plotinus, Λόγος', 245.

17 *Gen. litt.* 11.8.17; also 1.5.11; 1.2.6; 1.5.11; 11.8.17, v.13.29; *Conf.* XI.9.11; 12.

18 *Conf.* XI.9. 11.

19 Augustine refers to the Word of God as Form or Rational Principle more explicitly, in *Conf.* XI.2–9 and *Trin.* XV.15.25–16.26. Note the similarities in Plotinus, who designated the second Hypostasis, Intellect, as the origin of the Ideas and the Λόγος as the divine Form principle.

20 *Gen. litt.* 1.4.9; 1.2.6.

21 Plotinus' ontology is treated in Chapter 3.2.3.

changeability which is a direct consequence of its imperfection. He no doubt pondered the lack of coherence in the notion of an eternal and immutable God which produced a world which is temporal and constantly in a state of flux. To resolve this discrepancy, a creative, divine entity was required which could manifest in the world of the transcendent and eternal as well as the world of the senses.²² This he reserved for his divine Word, Christ, who, as Creator of the World, served an Intermediary.²³ There is a strict ontological distinction in Augustine's doctrine of creation between the Creator on the one hand and the creation or creatures on the other.

The Son and the Father are equal in their divinity. The Son is nonetheless unlike his Father, because of his quality of being both transcendent and immanent, as well as his earthly Incarnation.²⁴ For Augustine, there still remains a problem of how the eternal and immutable realm of God can connect to the temporal, changeable world and especially during the creation act. Plotinus' system of the Λόγος and Λόγοι provided Augustine with an excellent solution which he integrated in his conception of the two phases of creation and his theory of *Rationes* or Ideas.²⁵

2.4 *The Six Days of Creation or the Two Creation Phases*

Augustine saw that this discrepancy could be resolved when we consider the creation act occurring, initially at least, within the eternal realm itself. To justify this however, there must have been two phases in the creation process: the first in the eternal realm, the second—as elaboration of the first—, in the temporal. The first act of creation must have taken place simultaneously within 'one moment' or flash in eternity: *in actu condendi*. By positing this, Augustine could safeguard the eternal nature of the Creator as well as his equality and union with God the Father. Within this framework, the completion of creation within six calendar days as told in Genesis could not be understood literally.

22 This was a condition postulated by Philo Judaeus in *De Opificio Mundi*, as well as by other early Christian thinkers.

23 E.g., *Conf.* XI.2.4.

24 If God the Father is not immanent yet the Son is equal to the Father, then the Son cannot be immanent. In *Trin.* I–VII, Augustine resolves the antinomy in the relationship of the divine persons (Father and Son) and argues how they can be of equal substance.

25 See Agaësse and Solignac, *BA* 48 'Les raisons causales', 653, 657–668; 'Le Logos et les Logoi chez Plotin', 654–657. For a more extensive summary of Augustine's theory of *Rationes*, see O'Connell, *Origin of Soul*, 205; also for developments in Augustine's doctrine of *Rationes*. O'Connell refers also to *BA* 48, 653–668]; V. Boland, *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, Source and Synthesis* (Leiden, 1995) 41–45, 78–85; Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος', 242–243.

The number six had a symbolic significance, Augustine asserted, and hence, in this context, referred to a logical sequence of events which unfolded during the creation act.²⁶

The first phase of creation, the *prima conditio*²⁷ involved the creation of heaven and earth, but not the visible heaven and earth which we are accustomed to perceiving with our corporeal senses. 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth. And then by the expression "heaven" we must understand a spiritual created work already formed and perfected, which is, as it were, the heaven of this heaven which is the loftiest in the material world.' (*Gen. litt.* 1.9.15)²⁸

Thus the 'heaven of the heavens' *caelum caeli* was the first product of creation, a realm of pure Light, intelligence and knowledge which is closest to God. This was the domicile of the angels: heavenly beings enlightened with God's Wisdom by the *Verbum*, having received formation.²⁹ This was also the origin of the human soul as well as the destination of saints after their death.³⁰ (The angelic realm plays an important role in Augustine's exegesis of *Gen.* 1:26–27, the image of God. See section 3.2.2.) Then the Word created the 'invisible earth' which was, in other words, 'intelligible matter'. Within matter, the four elements (*elementa mundi*) came into being which were impregnated with causal reason principles or *Rationes causales*.³¹ These principles contained the laws of development and outlines for every future living being in the visible world. Thus, intelligible matter was impregnated with form in this same phase.³²

We can confirm here that Augustine's doctrine of matter resembles that of Plotinus:³³ it exists at the furthest distance from God, contains the least essence

26 *Gen. litt.* 11; IV.33.52; V.23.46, V.11.27 (*Gen. litt. imperf.* 7.28). The six days also symbolize for Augustine the six ages which are to come in world history: *Trin.* IV.4.7.

27 This term occurs in *Gen. litt.* V.5.12–16.

28 See also Augustine's exegesis of 'heaven': *Gen. litt.* book 1.3.7, 5.10, 9.15–17, 17.32; book 11.8.16–19; book 111.20.30–31; book IV.22.35. Delineated in section 3 on *imago Dei*. See note 73 for a full notation of his exegesis.

29 The beings of this reality are perfect creatures in respect to those with a carnal body, on account of their perfect formation in the first creation phase, by means of the Illumination of the *Verbum*. See section 3; *Gen. litt.* I.4.9–11; 111.20.31.

30 *Gen. litt.* 1.17.32; *Conf.* XII.2.3–3. 4. The Creator (uncreated 'Wisdom and Truth') made the heavens as the (created) pure intellectual realm of light, wisdom and truth. In this way the Light of the Word was imparted to this realm-and so it became a realm of Light.

31 *Gen. litt.* V.13.29; VI.1–2; IX.15.28; 1.2–3; IV.9.

32 *Gen. litt.* 1.14.28, 15.29.

33 The difference with Plotinus' view on intelligible matter: the Idea Matter (originated in the Intellect) is transmitted to Nature-Soul (in the divine and transcendent realm

of God and is in itself an unstable product. By the donation of form to matter, or its formation, material things acquired a certain stability. Accordingly, a created thing or creature composed of form and matter, possessed a certain unity in itself as a finished product (as in a unity of parts to their whole). Creatures and things were thus 'pre-formed' primordially in the first creation phase: invisibly, potentially and causally.³⁴ In sum, the creation act predominantly consisted of the process of formation (*Gen. litt.* v.5.14).

In the second creation phase, the *administratio*,³⁵ the rational principles unfolded in the material world within the realm of time. In this way, all kinds of physical beings with souls came into existence and are still being produced. The creation in the second phase was largely carried out by seminal 'reasons' or *Rationes seminales*,³⁶ the invisible, rational principles which were established in intelligible matter and developed and grew in the manner of seeds. They unfolded in accordance with the eternal Forms and eventually actualized all things in the visible world. Seminal reasons were also associated with numbers which manifested in the dimension of time and multiplicity. Augustine's borrowing of Plotinus' system of Λόγοι is evident here; the term *Rationes seminales* is mere translation of Λόγοι σπερματικοί, the form-bearing principles originating in the divine Intellect and Λόγος.³⁷

It was in the second creation phase that God instigated the commencement of world history. The material world remained governed and maintained by the *Rationes causales*, in complete dependency of God's will by divine Providence (*Gen. litt.* v.23.44). The *Rationes* assured the order, reasonability and stability

of the hypostasis Soul) from which physical matter is made (see Chapter 3.2.7). Another difference is that Plotinus attributes matter with the potential of doing evil (see Chapter 3.3.6).

34 *Gen. litt.* vI.6.10; ix.17.22. Matter plays an important role in Augustine's exegesis of Genesis. The church father defends *creatio ex nihilo* that God did not create the world from his own being. As such he did not posit the existence of matter before the existence of creation. Augustine's theory of matter, specifically how matter and form were brought together, is another example of a complicated issue which is presented here in the briefest terms. Augustine did mention intelligible matter (in the context of the four elements) yet it fell within the intelligible realm of the 'first creation'. This study will not deal with Augustine's exploration of the issue of 'spiritual matter', an issue which is also questioned by Plotinus.

35 *Gen. litt.* v.4, 10–11, 8.23, 9.24, 11.27, etc.

36 *Gen. litt.* I.5.9; IV.23.52; vI.10.17; vI.11.19; v.16.34. A clear representation of the *Rationes seminales* is also given in *Trin.* 111.8.13–14 and 111.9.16. Augustine must have noted the allusion to physical bodies and 'seed' in 1 Cor. 14:44. See also Chapter 6.2.3: 'Divine Mediation, Λόγος and *Verbum*.'

37 Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος', 256–257.

of established species. Their impact in the *administratio* phase explained how God could ‘rest’ on the seventh day, while the initial creation act was perpetuated in cosmic history.³⁸

The two moments of creation match up to the ontological levels mentioned earlier. For example, God, the Creator, the *Verbum*, the Ideas and the *Rationes aeternae*, exist above the creation, yet they are directly involved in the first phase of creation which was an intelligible, eternal realm of *Rationes causales*. The physical, visible world, effectuated by the *Rationes seminales*, is subject to time and changeability and corresponds to the second creation phase. Viewing this system as a whole, God the Father and the *Verbum* are perfect: the angelic, (intelligible) created realm is less perfect,³⁹ and the material realm of the cosmos is unquestionably deficient. Yet the *Rationes* all remain in connection with each other and thus resolve the ontological discrepancies between the eternal, divine realm and the sensible world of time. The three types of *Rationes* assume a mediatory function between the *Verbum* and the visible world.⁴⁰ Augustine’s doctrine of *Rationes* is of direct relevance to his discussions of the soul and also to his theory of Ideas. Now we will turn to the ways in which Augustine makes these various connections.

2.5 *The Ideas of God and the Rationes*

Augustine’s theory of Ideas assumes the Platonic notion that the things in our world are images or reflection of the Forms and Reason principles, the models or archetypes for the physical world. Following Plotinus (or Middle-Platonism), he posited that these exist in the intelligence of the Creator. The Ideas and the Rational principles are the invisible building blocks of the material world which become objective only in the second creation phase. The reason principles and the Forms, although they both have different functions in the creation, work alongside each other. Augustine treats them as synonymous. Altogether, these ‘creating Reasons’ exist on three levels of existence: that of the Creator (*Rationes aeternae*) and in the two phases of creation: the first or intelligible phase (*Rationes causales*) and the second or corporeal phase (*Rationes seminales*).⁴¹ As such, the *Rationes* serve as connecting principles between the three

³⁸ *Gen. litt.* IV.12.22; VI.10.17–19; VI.14.25,15,26.

³⁹ E.g., the lesser perfection has to do with the potential changeability of beings of the *caelum caeli*; Augustine is thinking here of the fall of angels such as Lucifer, as well as the human soul, which is mutable.

⁴⁰ Agaësse and Solignac, *BA* 48, ‘Les raisons causales’, 653, 657–668; *ibidem*, ‘Le Logos et les Logoi chez Plotin’, 654–657.

⁴¹ *Gen. litt.* V.12.28.

levels of existence, as intermediaries between the different ontological levels. All things in this world have a corresponding individual Idea. As such all created things have a double existence: in their own nature and in the eternal Ideas. Every created thing/creature is composed of matter and form and is thus a *concreatum*, having God as its cause. The things which came to be did so by receiving their Being from God who is Absolute Being.

Thus the assertion that Christ created the world by 'speaking' and materializing the eternal Ideas (*Formae*) or Reasons (*Rationes aeternae*) is essentially equivalent to saying: the world is an image of the Ideas and rational principles in Christ's Mind. The eternal Ideas here correspond with *Rationes aeternae* or *creandi* and are one and the same with the Creator, the *Verbum Dei*. Hence, one of the particular missions of the Son within the Holy Trinity is as Form and Reason principle of all things.⁴² Being the 'expression, utterance' of the God the Father, the *Verbum* encompasses the total Wisdom (*Sapientia*) of his Father. (This is in particular elaborated in *Trin.*) It thus follows that the term divine Wisdom is associated to some degree with the Ideas, the entire invisible, immutable and intelligible basis of all creation. More specifically, divine Wisdom for Augustine entails complete knowledge of how the creation act was performed and how the world was made.⁴³ This is an important association in Augustine's epistemology as well as his doctrine of the image of God. The images of the divine Ideas on the other hand, have a different character. Augustine's notion of image comes to fore in his interpretation of the creation of human beings and their formation.

2.6 *The Creation of Human Beings*

Augustine posited that the creation act occurred in one eternal flash, yet the order in which all things were made progressed along a logical sequence. This is why he delineated aspects of both creation phases separately, to show that the whole visible world consisted of a combination of elements from the first and second phases of creation. The visible world was composed of matter and form; human beings were composed of a body and a soul. Regarding the creation of human beings, Augustine was then faced with a problem: how did the soul,

42 I.e., *Sermo* 117; H. Meinhardt, 'Idee', in: J. Ritter and K. Gründer (eds.) *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 4: I–K (Darmstadt, 1976) 55–65, 64; Kondoleon correctly points out that Augustine never confronted the discrepancy of the plurality of Ideas in relation to the unity of the divine Mind. T. Kondoleon, 'Divine Exemplarism in Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* (1970) vol. 1, 181–195, 185.

43 See Kondoleon, 'Divine Exemplarism', 189 on Augustine's association of the *Verbum Dei* with Ideas and Wisdom.

which originated in the first creature of the first creation phase (*caelum caeli*), come together with the body, which came into existence in the second phase? And how could this solution be legitimized by biblical passages? As Augustine saw it, the formation of the human body alone was narrated in Genesis 2:7: 'And God fashioned the man with dust from the earth, and puffed into his face the puff of life, and the man was made into a living soul.'⁴⁴ His interpretation of these verses is that the creation of physical bodies actually began with the creation of earth—the intelligible earth or 'matter' in the first phase of creation (*Gen. litt.* III.22.34). This matter was impregnated with *Rationes* (Forms), which was further developed into visible matter (the 'dust' in Genesis) in the second phase of creation by *Rationes seminales*. According to the two creation stories which Augustine recognized in Genesis, a human soul is therefore a *Ratio causalis* and his corporeal development is instigated by *Ratio seminalis* (*Gen. litt.* VII.22.32), transmitted from the *Ratio causalis* in collaboration with divine Will (VII.14.25). This is essentially the same in Plotinus' cosmology: the soul is a λόγος and the body, which is attached to nature, the lower region of the soul, is developed by λόγοι σπερματικοί. Here we can recognize the same mild dualism between body and soul as is present in Plato's and Plotinus' anthropologies. The physical body is equipped with perceptual senses which are oriented to the material, experiential world of time and space. Matter and the physical body, in contrast to the immaterial form or the human soul, have a depreciated ontological status. Augustine affirms that the soul is nonetheless present in all parts of the body.⁴⁵ The body is *homo exterior* and the soul *homo interior* (*Gen. litt.* III.22.34).⁴⁶ The whole human being as creature belongs to the world of the senses—to the world of images, images of the Ideas. Gilson elucidates Augustine's view on the creation of the human being:

Since all creatures are images of the divine Ideas, there is not one of them in which the perfection of their common cause (LZ: God or the *Rationes*) does not find expression. Every created being is determined by an intelligible formula (*ratio*) which defines what it has to be according to its

44 Hill's translation from *Gen. litt.* VII.1.1. See also *Gen. litt.* III.22.34, VI.1, VI.11.19, VII.16.22 and VII.17.23.

45 G.B. Matthews points out that for Augustine it is not the body (the outer man) seeing when it sees something through the physical eyes, it is the soul—the inner man. 'The Inner Man', in: R. Markus (ed.), *Augustine, A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York, 1972) 177–189.

46 Other references to the inner and outer man, e.g., *Civ. Dei* XIII.24, *Ep.* 238, 12 and *Trin.* XI–XII. See C. Horn, 'Anthropologie', in: V.H. Drecoll (ed.) *Augustin Handbuch* (Tübingen, 2007) 479–488.

nature; so it has shape, form, order, measure and beauty. Even change and becoming can be expressed in intelligible terms by means of numbers.⁴⁷

Gilson suggests here that according to Augustine, an individual person or soul,⁴⁸ an individual *ratio*, is a particular of an intelligible, immaterial Idea or creation principle.⁴⁹ Yet this is not what Augustine portrays in *Gen. litt.* Augustine does affirm that every human being is a descendant from Adam and Eve. On the other hand, he is reserved about making any certain statements on whether Adam and Eve were the first particulars of the Idea 'Human Being' or something of that nature.⁵⁰ The hypothesis that every individual human being may be an image of an Idea, is not something Augustine readily settles for. In fact he finds that it demands further elucidation and further specification, which will be briefly discussed here.

To begin with, the human soul *ratio*, as stated in *Gen. litt.* III.20.30, had been created at the same time as the angelic intelligence of the *caelum caeli*, the pure intellectual realm of light. Yet he questions this in book VI.

For in that first creation of the world when God created all things simultaneously (LZ: the first phase of the creation act, the *prima conditio* which took place in eternity and not in the dimension of time), He created man in the sense that He made the man who was to be, that is, the causal principle of man to be created, not the actuality of man already created.

Gen. litt. VI.9.16

One of the many problems here is, is it the whole human being which is a causal principle created in the realm of celestial intelligence? And how can this be reconciled with Augustine's view on the two creation stories in Genesis, the one depicting the creation of the human body and the other, the creation of the soul? 'But now the question has to be faced how we can understand its

47 Gilson, *Introduction*, 260; *ibidem*, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London, 1972) 74.

48 What makes a human being a 'person' for Augustine, is the soul. A.C. Lloyd, 'On Augustine's Concept of a Person', in: Markus, *Augustine, A Collection*, 191–205.

49 *Gen. litt.* V.15.33, 16.34 and *Trin.* IV.1.3. See Gilson, *Introduction*, 1969, note 50. On the question of whether Ideas of particular individuals exist: *Ep.* 14.4; In *De libero arbitrio* (III.iv.13) he links the *Rationes rerum* with degrees of being. This seems to signify that there are individual types of things rather than particular individuals. O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987) 189–199.

50 *Ep.* 137.3. See also O'Connell, *Origin of Soul*; R.J. Teske, 'Soul', *AttA*, 807–812, 809; P. Agaësse and A. Solignac, 'Les problèmes de l'âme dans le "De genesi ad litteram"', *BA* 48, 695–706.

causal formula being said to have been there in the first works of God during the six days, when God made man to his image, which can only be rightly understood with reference to the soul.' (*Gen. litt.* VII.22.32). Subsequently he struggles with a number of different inquiries simultaneously, exploring different ways in which the verses in Genesis could possibly correspond to his theory of *Rationes*. He makes several attempts which continue through books VI and VII in *Gen. litt.* and finally reaches a conclusion⁵¹ that it is indeed likely that the soul—the *imago Dei* was originally created at the same time as the realm of angels and that it was subsequently breathed into the body at the creation of the body (which he discusses further and at length in books IX and X). However the process of the individuation of the souls from the primordial soul in the realm of the angels is a tough question for which he finds no satisfying answer. He remains reticent as well about speculating on the pre-existence of the soul.⁵²

In *Gen. litt.* III.20.30 (as well as in the quote above), Augustine specifies that the image of God can only be located in the soul and not the body of humans. The image is located specifically in the highest part of the soul, the only region in the mind, the *ratio* or *mens*, above which nothing exists except God Himself.⁵³ This being so, then the human being or the soul as image of a specific Idea is not Augustine's final answer as Gilson suggested. The soul, as image of God, is only the image of her Creator.

2.7 Definition of 'Image'

The departure point of Augustine's cosmology is his theory of Ideas, which entailed that all things in the visual world are images of an intelligible, transcendent counterpart (Idea) existing in the divine Creator's intelligence.⁵⁴ Plotinus indicated a material image of an Idea with the term εἰδωλον; but Augustine seldom connotes these with the term 'image' (*imago*). In *De Ideis*, an 'image' is referred to as 'individual or particular things' (*singula*). He does treat the term 'image' in other essays in *Div. qu.*, such as no. 83 in which the term *imago* is equated to 'resemblance' (also in *Gen. litt. imperfect.* 59). Additionally, he equates visual images with the objects of 'corporeal vision' (*Gen. litt.* XII.7.16). (See section 4 for Augustine's theory of three visions.) In *Trin.*, he employs the

51 A conclusion which was already drawn in *Conf.* XII–XIII and *Gen. litt.* III.20–30–31 but which he re-introduced later in *Gen. litt.* X in the form of an 'hypothesis', subsequently subjecting it to analysis, ultimately confirming its validity.

52 See O'Connell, *Origin of the Soul*, 201–245, 241–245.

53 *De Ideis*; *Gen. litt.* III.20.31; III.22.34; V.13.30; *Trin.* XI.5.8, XIV.14.20.

54 L. Zwollo, 'St. Augustine's Mystagogical Instruction of Ideas and Images', in: P.J.J. van Geest (ed.) *Seeing with the Eyes of Faith, New Approaches to the Mystagogy of the Church Fathers* (Leuven, 2016) 289–302.

term *vestigium* (translated as vestige or trace) to signify generally the same as what Plotinus refers to as image or trace (εἰκῶν, εἴδωλον or ἕχνος).⁵⁵ These all have to do with something invisible contained within the physical form of an object or body which resembles an eternal, intelligible Form but is far from being divine itself.

Augustine speaks of three other types of images in his doctrine of creation: the second kind is derived from the visual images which are picked up by our physical senses, called *imagines*. They are stored up in the memory and when recalled, the term *phantasia* is used.⁵⁶ Another term for 'image' is the *phantasma*, images of corporeal images constructed by the imagination. These kinds of images are experienced in 'spiritual vision' (*Gen. litt.* XII.7.16). In the essay *De Ideis*, Augustine demonstrates that it is the mental capacity inherent to the rational soul, with which we grasp and judge the relation of the images of the visual world in their resemblance to and participation with the true Ideas in the Mind of the Creator. In *Gen. litt.* XII, Augustine refers to the true understanding of these images in the higher region of the soul as an intellectual vision.⁵⁷ *Visio intellectualis* takes place in the region of the human soul which he defines in his doctrine of creation as the *imago Dei*, the human mind or intellect, which constitutes the third kind of image. Intellectual vision involves the awareness or knowledge acquired by the human intellect when contemplating the Ideas. The fourth type of usage of the term 'image' by Augustine is the Perfect Image, pertaining to Christ, the Son of God of God the Father. The former is also the origin of divine Ideas or Forms.⁵⁸

2.8 The Influence of Plotinus

Augustine's general definition of image is no different than that of Plotinus: an image can be a likeness of that which it is an image of, but this likeness does not necessarily imply an exact resemblance or an equality.⁵⁹ For example:

But when he reaches higher principles ... He will leave that behind (LZ: his lower nature) and choose another, the life of the gods: for it is to them, not

55 *Trin.* VI.10.12, XII.5.5; See also Chapter 5.3; Sullivan, *Image of God*, 87–88.

56 In *Gen. litt.* XII.6.15, 7.16, 18, 8.19, 9.20, 10.21, 11.22, etc. Augustine is treating here images in spiritual visions (*phantasia*, *phantasmata*, *imagines*), as the second of the three types of visions. See section 4.3 of this chapter. These kinds of images are also depicted in *Conf.* X.8.12–21.31 on *memoria*; also in *Trin.*, e.g., VIII.6.9, IX.6.10, IX.5.8, etc.

57 Treated in section four of this chapter. See *Gen. litt.* XII.6.15; 7.16; 7.18; 8.19; 9.20; 10.21, 11.22, etc. These images are explained in terms of the three types of visions.

58 *Gen. litt.* IX.16.28, *Gen. litt. imperfect.* 60–61, *De Ideis*.

59 See Plotinus: Chapter 3.2.1; Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology*, 108–112.

to good men, that we are to be made like. Likeness to good men is the likeness of two pictures of the same subject to each other; but likeness to the gods is likeness to the model, a being of a different kind to ourselves.

Enn. I.2.7.24, 27–30

Statements such as these in the *Enneads* designate the contrast between the likeness of images of God—the human intellect—and the gods themselves. This dissimilarity involves a different kind of being or substance than that of the divine entities. In a comparable passage below, Augustine mentions the immaterial Ideas (in this context, the Virtues) which are perceived by the human intellect in their true existence, in contrast to bodies or bodily images. Augustine makes a clear differentiation between the God the Creator—where the Ideas exist, and the creature: in this case, the image of God, the human intellect.

So too in that third category of things seen by intellectual vision, there are some that are seen in the soul itself, like the virtues (LZ: these are Ideas) ... Yet it is only intellectually that they can be seen; they are not, after all, bodies nor do they have bodily images. But the light itself is something else, the light by which the soul is enlightened in order to truly understand and observe all the things either in itself or in this light. For this light is God himself, while the soul is a creature, even though a rational and intelligent one made to his image.

Gen. litt. XI.31.59

The following quotes illustrate the visual images (in Augustine's Latin: *imagines* or *phantasma/phantasiae*, derived from the Greek φαντασῖαι) which are stored in the memory and judged by the intellect when contemplating the Ideas. Here we note an exact borrowing from Plotinus' system of images. Both thinkers even utilize a similar terminology.

PLOTINUS: For remembering μνημονεύειν is either thinking or imaging (ἢ νοεῖν ἢ φαντάζεσθαι); and the images (ἡ φαντασία) come to the soul not by possession, but as it sees, so it is disposed; and if it sees sense-objects (τὰ αἰσθητά), it sinks low in proportion to the amount of them it sees. For because it possesses all things in a secondary way, and not so perfectly [as Intellect] ...⁶⁰

Enn. IV.4.3.7–10

60 Treated in Chapter 3.3.3.

AUGUSTINE: So too we absorb the images of bodily things (*phantasias rerum corporalium*) through the senses of the body and transfer them somehow to the memory (*memoriae*) and from them we fabricate images (*ficto phantasmate*) with which to think about things we have not seen ... but whenever we correctly approve or disapprove of something represented by such images, we have the inescapable conviction that we make our judgment ... by altogether different rules which abide unchangeably above our minds. Thus when I call to mind the ramparts of Carthage which I have seen, and form a picture of those in Alexandria which I have not seen and prefer some of these forms in my imagination (*imaginarias formas*) to others, I make a rational preference. The judgment of truth is shining vigorously from above, and it is firmly supported by the wholly unbiased rules of its own proper law, and even if it is somewhat veiled by a kind of cloud of bodily images (*corporalium imaginum*), still it is not entangled and confused by them.⁶¹

Trin. IX.6.10

Both Augustine and Plotinus posited that the intellect, the highest part of the soul, was the image of God, as we shall see in the next section. The aspect of judging the images by the higher mind is more evident in the passage of Augustine, although this mental process was emphatically present in Plotinus' thought as well. It is indeed implied in the quote from the *Enneads*, stating that physical images are secondary to intellect—that which perceives the images in their true intelligible manifestation.

Another similarity between Plotinus and Augustine is their explication of the relationship of the Ideas to the particulars, mentioned in terms of participation.⁶² V. Boland claims that 'Augustine did not develop a philosophical account of participation.'⁶³ Yet in my view, Augustine assimilated the Platon-

61 To illustrate the images produced in the mind, Augustine often uses the example of Carthage, which Augustine has seen before, and Alexandria, which he has never seen and thus must imagine how it must be (e.g., *Gen. litt.* XII.6.15 / Taylor: XII.23; *Trin.*, VIII.6.9–10; *De musica* 6.11.32; *Ep.* 120.2.10). I selected this passage from *Trin.* for this comparison because it was succinct and it demonstrated most clearly Augustine's terminology.

62 Augustine on participation and/or resemblance: *Div. qu.* 23, 51 and 74; *Soliloquiorum* 11.20; *De quantitate animae* 13, 20 and 22; *Civ. Dei* XII.2; *Gen. litt. imperf.* 16.57 and 58; *De vera religione* 31.58, 34.62; *Retract.* 1.26.32, *Sermo* 1.8.9.38; See also Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology*, e.g., 165–169; Gilson, *Introduction* (1969) 265–275; *ibidem*, *History of Christian Philosophy*, 70–77, 276–285; Markus, "Imago" and "Similitudo".

63 *Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, Source and Synthesis* (Leiden, 1995) 46.

ist's definition of participation and therefore found it self-explanatory. He did in fact explicate precisely the participation between the image of God and God throughout *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.*

By participation in the Idea or *Ratio*, each thing is what it is and how it is. The intellect as image of God is potentially able to participate in the second divine Trinitarian Person, which includes Christ's divine Ideas.⁶⁴ Augustine deems the *imago Dei* in his doctrine of creation as an image of the *Verbum Dei*.⁶⁵ He tends to state more often and more explicitly than Plotinus that the relationship of the intellect-image of God can be better characterized as dissemblance (*dissimilitudo*) than resemblance. Both regard increasing one's resemblance or imaging of God as a means of spiritual growth and improvement. In Augustine's doctrines, the Son of God represents the exception to the rule of images, as perfect Image of the Father. There is no difference between the Son and Father in the Trinity in substance, quality or value therefore they are equal in image and likeness.⁶⁶ In Plotinus' view, perfect imaging does not exist.

3 The Soul-Intellect in Augustine's Doctrine of the *Imago Dei* in *De genesi ad litteram*

3.1 Introduction to *De genesi ad litteram* and the *Imago Dei*

The human soul as being created as *imago Dei* is mentioned copiously throughout Augustine's entire oeuvre.⁶⁷ Considering all the works in which Augustine interprets Genesis 1:26–27, *Gen. litt.* III.19, 29, 20.30–32 represent a decisive stage in his doctrine. His interpretation is not only especially rich in content but is also striking in its originality. The *imago Dei* treated here is from book III, but also from book VI in the context of his exegesis of Adam and Eve and then again from book XII in the context of his theory of three visions. His first treatment of the *imago Dei* in III.20 deals with the notions of conversion, formation and illumination in acquiring divine knowledge which are intricately related to his depiction of the origin of the soul in the angelic realm. The divine knowledge which humans can obtain correlates to angelic knowledge as well

64 *De Ideis*, *Gen. litt.* v.13.29.

65 *Gen. litt. imperfect.* 61, *Trin.* IV.1.3, 3.5–6.

66 The difference between God the Father and God the Son is dealt with more extensively in *Trin. e.g.*, VII.3.5 (and *Conf.* XI.2–9). See also Chapter 5.2.5. Augustine explains in more detail in *Trin.* than in *Gen. litt.* how Christ is our model: *Trin.* IV.1.3, 2.4, 3.5–6.

67 See Chapter 1 section 4.1 for a listing of these works.

as to Augustine's thought on the afterlife in experiencing complete knowledge of God in a final vision. The second treatment of the *imago Dei* in the context of original sin, in his exegesis of the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Paradise, involves as well his notions of will *voluntas* and grace *gratia*. Although Augustine's association of the *imago Dei* with his conception of sin and original sin is not the main departure point of this study, it is nonetheless important to touch upon these here as they serve as significant background factors, not only for Augustine's doctrine of *amor* and *caritas* in *Trin.*, but also for studying the Plotinian influence on Augustine. The final treatment of the *imago Dei* in *Gen. litt.* concerns intellectual vision which is a particularly salient feature of Augustine's doctrine of the image as intellect. It lays the foundation for his explanation of the *imago Trinitatis* in *Trin.* and is a major component of Augustine's indebtedness to Plotinus. The importance of the link between the image of God in *Gen. litt.* III and intellectual vision in XII cannot be emphasized enough because it is often missed in studies on Augustine's theology of the image of God.⁶⁸

3.2 *The Imago Dei in De genesi ad litteram III*

3.2.1 *Imago Dei* as Intellect

In book III, Augustine is faced with Genesis 1:26–27: 'God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness ...' 1:27: 'God created man in his own image ...'⁶⁹ He views these verses as the biblical indication of the creation of the human soul. The meaning of the words 'our image' in Gen. 1:26–27, he clarifies, must signify 'to the image of the Trinity' due to the apparent plurality of divine Persons as Creator here. However, he does not proceed to explain the image of God as an image of the Trinity. In discussing the rest of verse 27, he adds that because man is endowed with reason, humans have authority over the animal kingdom (III.19.29). This is why the image referred to in Genesis can only signify the human reason facility (*mens*, the mind, the intellect or intelligence) because only the rational soul (which animals only possess to a limited degree)

68 Boersma, among others, overlooks this connection in his study of the younger Augustine's conception of image (*Augustine's Early Theology*). See Chapter 1 section 4.1 for the *status quaestionis* on Augustine's image of God.

69 Gen. 1:26: 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps over the earth. 27: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.' (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1%3A26-27&version=ESV>) April 2014.

can resemble God.⁷⁰ Augustine then refers to a particular quote of Paul which is repeated throughout *Gen. litt.* as well as *Trin.* This provides further justification of the superiority of human intelligence over animals and the rest of creation, which has to do with the highest part of the soul.

Hence, St. Paul says “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who is being renewed unto the knowledge of God, according to the image of his Creator.”⁷¹ By these words he shows wherein man has been created to the image of God, since it is not by any features of the body but by a perfection of the intelligible order, that is, of the mind when illuminated.⁷²

Gen. litt. III.20.30 (Translation: Taylor)

Hence Augustine correlates his definition of *imago Dei* as the highest part of the soul, the intellect, with Paul’s exegesis of the image of God as that part of the human being which undergoes spiritual renewal and transformation by acquiring knowledge of God. By obtaining this knowledge, one puts off one’s old self, the self which is identified with sin and the material life. For Augustine, the

70 *De Ideis* (2): ‘Now among the things which have been created by God, the rational soul is the most excellent of all, and it is closest to God when it is pure.’

71 The quote from Paul is Augustine’s own translation. The biblical references are: Eph. 4:21–24: ‘21: in assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22: to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23: and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24: and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.’/ Col. 3:1: ‘If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2: Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3: For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4: When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5: Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6: On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7: In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8: But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9: Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10: and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11: Here, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.’ / Rom. 12:2: ‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.’ Bible.org. <http://www.gnpcb.org/esv/search/?q=Ephesians+4>. May 2015.

72 *Gen. litt.* III.20.30: *satis ostendens, ubi sit homo creatus ad imaginem Dei, quia non corporis liniamentis, sed forma quadam intelligibili mentis inluminatae.*

new self is likewise identified with the *imago Dei*. (This notion is emphasized in *Trin.*, where Augustine also identifies the *imago Dei* with the inner and true self.)

In the final sentence of the above quote, Augustine states that humans were created according to the image of God, not in the human figuration but in the illuminated soul (*mens*). By referring to the perfection of the intelligible order, he is implying the contemplation of the rational principles, the Ideas by the higher soul in a state of being illumined by the Creator (see *De Ideis* and section 4.2). By contemplating these, one becomes a more perfect image of God. In effect, Augustine is now integrating Paul's statements about the image into the context of his theory of Ideas and the notion of intellect. Yet the 'illumined mind' refers to a complex but fascinating facet of his doctrine of the *imago Dei* which he introduces here. The key word here is 'light' which refers to his exegesis of Gen. 1:3: 'Let there be Light.'⁷³

But first that light was created in which there was produced a knowledge of the Divine Word by whom it was created and the knowledge consisted precisely in this creature's turning from its unformed state to God who formed it and in its being created and formed.

Gen. litt. III.20.30 (Translation: Taylor)

The theme 'light' was treated briefly in section 2 of this chapter at his interpretation of Gen. 1:1 'And God made heaven and earth'. Augustine interpreted the making of 'heaven' as the creation of the angels, creatures of pure intelligence in the *caelum caeli*, the 'intelligible' heaven in the first moment of the creation

73 Augustine's treatment of the creation of Light, equated with intelligible heaven, the angels and the soul in *Gen. litt.*, recall much of what Augustine expounds in *Conf.*, yet contains some differences. See Agaësse-Solignac, *BA* 48, 581–584, 586–588.; A. Solignac, 'Caelum caeli', *BA* 14 (*Confessions* XII) 592–598.; In *Gen. litt.* III.20.30–31, Augustine establishes and reinforces the relationship between the human soul as *imago Dei* and the celestial realm. See *Conf.* XII.2.2, 8.8, 9.9, 11.12, 13.16, 15.19–22, 16.23 and XIII.2.2–3; 3.4, 4.5, 8.9, 16.19–21 and 23; *Gen. litt.* book I.3.7, 5.10, 9.15–17, 17.32; book II.8.16–19; book III.20.30–31; book IV.22.35; *Civ. Dei*: e.g., X.15–17, 25–26; XI.4.7–9, 11–13, 15–20, 26, 29, 32–33 (and image of God), 28–29, 32–33; XII.9; *Trin.* XIV.17.23 and 18.24.

The relationship between the soul and the angelic realm is also evident in Augustine's teaching of the afterlife and resurrection, when mankind will become a perfect image of God, attain intellectual vision—the same knowledge as the angels—and become equal to them (see section 3 on Augustine's eschatology). *Gen. litt.* IV.23.40, 24.41, 25.42, V.20.38, VI.19.30, 21.30, XII.35.68, 36.69; *Conf.* XII.13.16; *Trin.* XIV.19.25 and 26, XV.23 and 24; See: L. Zwollo, 'St. Augustine on the Soul's Divine Experience: *Imago Dei* and *Visio Intellectualis* from book 12 of *De genesi ad litteram libri XII*', *SP* (2013) vol. 70, 85–91.

act. We recall that this is where he designated the origin of the human soul.⁷⁴ Now in III.20.31, he binds this exegesis of 'heaven' and the origin of the soul with his exegesis of Gen. 1:26–27, the *imago Dei*. The result is that the human intellect in its acquisition of pure knowledge is clearly related to the angels. In order to follow Augustine's line of thinking in these passages we must reiterate Augustine's interpretation of this first day of creation and the *caelum caeli* and investigate this in more detail.

3.2.2 The *Imago Dei* and the Angels

In the first moment of creation, the intelligible foundation was established for all existing things, which will later come into existence in the second phase. In this initial, eternal moment, the creation act began with the making of a realm of beings of pure intelligence and intellect designated as the angels or *creatura intelligibilis*.⁷⁵ It was at the creation of light that the beings of pure intellect as well as the human soul came into existence. Augustine avers that this realm was made directly by the *Verbum Dei* (thus not by the *Verbum's Rationes*) which means that the human soul was directly made by the *Verbum* as well.⁷⁶ This also explains the higher status of the soul in the order of created things (*Gen. litt.* I.4.9; II.8.16–19).

Of importance here is Augustine's description of how this realm came to be of pure intelligence. It was not only because it was the first creature and therefore closest to God's own intelligence and like God Himself, a purely immaterial realm. It was because the beings in this realm acquired a certain knowledge or intelligence at the time of their creation, which Augustine described in terms of *conversio* and *formatio*.⁷⁷

74 He also equated the *caelum caeli* with the destination of saints after their physical death: the Heavenly City, Jerusalem (*Civ. Dei*. XI.7).

75 Agaësse-Solignac indicate a change in Augustine's thinking in his treatment of the *caelum caeli* (BA 48, 586–587). They comment that in *Conf.*, his treatment of the angelic realm resembles that of an hypostasis (Νοῦς). In that sense, the Plotinian influence was more evident in *Conf.* than in *Gen. litt.* The angelic realm in *Gen. litt.* I.9.17: *la vie intellectuelle en soi (ipsa est intellectualis vita)* does not designate a Hypostasis or 'an intellectual realm' in the same way as *Conf.* XII.11.12; but more of a metaphysical condition, a degree of nature (e.g., *Gen. litt.* II.8.16). ('*Caelum caeli*', 586–588). Agaësse-Solignac's conclusion is not entirely correct. Augustine's exposition of the intellectual angelic realm in *Gen. litt.* corresponds in many ways to Plotinus' notion of Νοῦς. Yet this realm surely cannot be likened to a Hypostasis. In *Gen. litt.* Augustine accentuates the angels' perfect contemplation of the Ideas. This aspect is absent in his rendition in *Conf.* Thus the Plotinian influence is actually more evident in *Gen. litt.* than in *Conf.*

76 Augustine expresses this more directly in *Trin.* II.8.4.

77 See A. Solignac, '27. *Conversio, Formatio*', BA 14, 613–614 (which also explains this phe-

Initially, the light Beings or the angels were created without form and in an imperfect state. By being called back to the Creator (I.3.7, I.4.9) by the Creator Himself, they turned (*conversio*) to the Light of their source, the *Verbum*.

And so, when Scripture declares, God said “Let there be ...” we may understand this as an immaterial utterance of God in His eternal Word, as the Word recalls His imperfect creature to Himself, so that it may not be formless but may be formed ... In this conversion and formation, the (LZ: angelic) creature in its own way imitates the Divine Word, the Son of God, who is eternally united with the Father in the perfect likeness and equal essence by which He and the Father are one.

Gen. litt. I.4.9

In this illumination, triggered by their conversion, the angels were able to ‘see’, thus acquire knowledge, their perfection and formation. The latter consisted of two important aspects (*Gen. litt.* II.8.16–19): (i.) the awareness that the origin and cause of the world was a Divine Creator, and (ii.) the knowledge of the Ideas in the Creator’s Mind (*in mente divina*) by which the world was made, by having seen them or contemplated them themselves.⁷⁸ The angels thereby obtained a perfect understanding of the Creator, as well as of the creation act and mankind’s future destiny. The angels performed these intellectual acts simultaneously, in accordance with the simultaneity of the creation act, the *prima conditio*, which took place in one moment in eternity (IV.31.48, 33.51). Here Augustine is describing a perfect intellectual vision (*visio Dei*) which human souls cannot obtain in this life but are destined for in the afterlife at the time of resurrection (XII.36.69).

Acquiring their wisdom, the angels became ‘created Wisdom’ (*sapientia facta*) by the *Verbum Dei*, who himself is ‘uncreated or Engendered Wisdom’

nomenon in *Gen. litt.*), ‘Origine plotinienne de l’idée “conversion”’ (*ibidem*, BA 14, 614–617); Vannier, *Creatio, conversion, formation*.

78 Augustine describes angelic knowledge in: *Gen. litt.* IV.23.40, 24.41, 25.42, V.20.38, XII.35.68, 36.69. Especially in book IV, this knowledge is explained in terms of ‘evening’ and ‘morning’, as mentioned in the creation story in Genesis. ‘Evening knowledge’ is self-knowledge, the acknowledgement of one’s own proper nature and dissimilarity with God’s Being (IV.22.39). It also includes direct knowledge of creatures as they exist. ‘Morning knowledge’ or Light is obtained when the angels turn to the Creator, the *Verbum*, and are formed by the unchangeable Truth. This entails acquiring knowledge of the Ideas, the causal principles of all creatures; this precedes all other knowledge due to its derivation from the *Verbum*. Morning knowledge (light) also consists of praising the Creator. For the angels it is always ‘evening and morning’ because they exist in the realm of eternity.

(*sapientia genita*). Augustine indicates that Heaven first existed as a Form in the Creator which was then objectified as the spiritual creature itself. Then the intelligible world was made known to the angels. Thereby at their formation, they became an image of 'Uncreated Wisdom'. The angels imitate unceasingly the *Verbum* by contemplating their source 'which always and unchangeably adheres to the Father' or 'who always adheres to the Father in complete likeness and equality of Being' (*Gen. litt.* 1.4.9).

The angels may then be perfectly formed but they are not divine in Augustine's view. At any rate they are closer to the divine than humans in the physical world. The human soul which is neither divine (*Gen. adu. Man.* 11.8.11, etc.), does not possess this perfection and never will in this lifetime. This has to do with the fact that humans possess a physical body which is bound to the dimensions of time and space. Their perfection will not take place in one flash in eternity as with the angels, rather it will occur in a process of development throughout the course of their lives as well as in the afterlife. What the human soul does possess from the angels,—by virtue of the fact that the human soul originated in the angelic realm—is the same movement of conversion and formation which enabled the angels to receive their ultimate formation and perfection as creatures. This was instilled in the human soul at its creation and is thus present in every human soul. Augustine's interpretation of heaven as the angelic realm of existence provides justification for why the human soul is a rational, intellectual creature. It is the only creature who is related not only to the first created light in the *caelum caeli* where the Word of God and His uncreated Wisdom is perfectly known, but also in a direct manner to the Light of the Word and his uncreated Wisdom, as its source of divine knowledge. This clarifies why Augustine associates the *imago Dei* with the realm of pure intelligence as well as the highest region of the soul, the intellect:

This explanation (LZ: of the intellectual creation 'heaven') is borne out in the case of the creation of man, "Let us make man to our own image and likeness ..." "And God made man to the image of God." For the nature of this creature is intellectual as is the light previously mentioned and so its creation is identified with its knowing the Divine Word through whom it was made. ... For the nature of this creature is intellectual, as is the light previously mentioned and so its creation is identified with knowing the Divine Word through whom it was made ... man is rational and is made perfect by this very knowledge of which there is question. As for those things however that were not created in that knowledge, because they were being created either as bodies or as non-rational souls, knowledge of them was first of all made in the intellectual creation by the Word ...

the knowledge of them was now made in that nature which was able to know this in the Word of God beforehand.

III.20.31

Augustine confirms in this passage the immateriality of the human soul and its true nature as intellectual, by virtue of its similarity to that primeval light. Augustine speaks here also of the complete knowledge of creation of the angels who witnessed the whole of the creation act which humans are later destined to acquire: contemplating perfectly the *Verbum*, seeing the divine Ideas and understanding completely the metaphysical principles of creation. This is why he underlines the intellect's capacity for obtaining divine knowledge and its importance as one of the main attributes of the highest part of the soul. Yet humans in their physical existence are faced with a different set of circumstances than angels: 'For after original sin, man is renewed in the knowledge of God according to the image of God according to the image of his Creator. (Col. 3:10)' (*Gen. litt.* III.20.32). His mentioning of original sin here is significant: the human soul, after being born into a body, is confronted with the repercussions of Adam's disobedience to God, which are alleviated by consciously striving to become a better image and obtaining divine knowledge. The topic of original sin will be further elucidated in this section.

Thus, Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* underscores the importance of acquiring wisdom or knowledge, by contemplating the Ideas, which is essential to becoming a perfect image of God and ascending to God. In sum, the groundwork of Augustine's doctrine of the image of God in *Gen. litt.* has an epistemological, redemptive character. Because the *imago Dei* can know God and acquire wisdom by contemplating the Ideas, it is distinguished from the lower soul, as well as from other creatures and things in the visible world. It is also set apart from them in that it is able to resemble God by obtaining divine Wisdom and become a perfect image of God.

By virtue of its origin in the *caelum caeli*, an intelligible region of pure intellect, the human intellect has a strong affinity with the holy angels, whose adherence to the *Verbum Dei* it strives to imitate. Like the angels (but unlike other creatures), the intellect is able to turn to the *Verbum*, contemplate Him, thereby receive illumination and formation. With its capacity to acquire divine knowledge and participate in the divine, the human image undergoes its formation in the dimension of time in a gradual manner. The angels, on the other hand, received their formation in one flash in the realm of eternity in the first phase of the creation act. The angels are images of Christ, the eternal Son of God, the Creator, and accordingly, they imitate Him. Christ, in turn, is a perfect Image of the Father and contemplates the Father unfailingly. The human intellect is

an image of the Creator as well. Augustine applied the term 'Divine Wisdom' to the Creator; yet 'divine wisdom', which humans are able to attain, is associated with becoming aware of the Ideas in God's mind.

3.2.3 The Influence of Plotinus

Many Plotinian concepts were noted in this exposition at Augustine's doctrine of creation and the human intellect. A few of the most striking correspondences will be discussed here briefly. The first is Plotinus' depiction of how the Intellect came into being.⁷⁹ The divine Intellect came into existence as an 'utterance'-a Λόγος, or a trace or an Image of the One (for example in *Enn.* v.1.7.1–5, 17.39). Augustine also described the *Verbum Dei* as coming into existence by God the Father speaking, becoming his Word and also his Perfect Image (*Gen. litt.* 1.2.6, 4.9, 5.11). After coming forth from the One, the Νοῦς had two stages of development: in the first, it was inchoate and longed to know its source. It turned (ἐπιστροφή) to the One to contemplate it. Subsequently, it received its properties of pure Thought and the intelligible world.⁸⁰ A similar process of formation took place in the *caelum caeli* in Augustine's cosmology: the angels who were created of light turned to the higher light, the Creator, to contemplate Him and thereby received their formation.⁸¹ In Augustine's doctrine, the *caelum caeli* was an immaterial realm of pure intellect; the same characteristics can be applied to Plotinus' conception of the Νοῦς. Of particular interest to note here are the paragraphs in *Enn.* v.8.3.27–end, 4, where Plotinus describes Heaven (Οὐρανός) as the realm of Νοῦς. Here the gods are in constant contemplation of the One, just as the angels are in Augustine's version. Yet, contrary to Plotinus' Νοῦς, Augustine's notion of the angelic realm was not deemed divine. Instead, it was considered creaturely (which by definition excluded divinity). In sum, Augustine's view of angels as well as the *Verbum* bears similarities to Plotinus' second Hypostasis, in the depiction of his contemplating the One, the origin of his own Light.⁸²

Another example in Plotinus is the divine Intellect which reproduced itself by splitting itself up into individual intellects, thereby bringing into existence

79 How the Νοῦς came into existence was treated in Chapter 3 in section 4.2: 'The Divine Intellect's Relationship to the One' and 4.3: 'The Divine Intellect'.

80 E.g., *Enn.* v.3.11, v.1.6–7, v.2.1.

81 On the Plotinian influence in Augustine's conception of *caelum caeli*: the conception of the Νοῦς: Solignac, '*Caelum caeli*', 592–598. Solignac cites *Enn.* v.3.8 and 11.4.5 as possible influences on Augustine's doctrine of illumination (595).

82 On how Augustine assimilated the characteristics of Plotinus' Νοῦς and the intelligible world for his doctrine of the *Verbum Dei*, see Chapter 6.2.2. Also e.g., Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος', 249–250; and Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin*, 83–88.

the human intellect (*Enn.* 11.4.5.5–8). A parallel situation can be detected in Augustine's placement of the origin of the soul in the *caelum caeli*—the pure intellectual realm of Light (*Gen. litt.* 111.20.30–31), from which individual souls somehow came forth.⁸³ Plotinus stated:

The remaining possibility, then, is for the soul to have received an intelligent life, a trace of the life of Intellect; for the true realities are there. But the life and activity of Intellect is the first light shining primarily for itself and an outshining upon itself, at once illuminating and illuminated (I.Z: by the One), the truly intelligible, both thinker and thought ... It is such kind that it apprehends itself more clearly, but we apprehend it by means of it; by reasonings of this kind our soul also is led back up to it, as its life is a reflection and likeness of it ...

Enn. v.3.8.35–39, 44–49

This passage involves the illumination of the human intellect νοῦς by its demi-urge Νοῦς, of which it is an image or trace. Plotinus states here that all its intelligence—its perception and apprehension of the intelligible—, is derived from the Νοῦς. For that reason, it is always drawn back to the Intellect in the desire to resemble it. This indeed parallels the relationship between the image of God-intellect in Augustine's view being illuminated by the *Verbum Dei*. Its

83 As mentioned earlier, the origin of the soul was a subject which Augustine said he could not entirely explain, as he apparently found no scriptural evidence to support the notion of individual souls deriving from this 'conglomerate soul' (*Gen. litt.* vii.24.35). In book vii, Augustine ruminates on the origin of the soul, attempting to reconcile biblical notions as the life of the body breathed into Adam's face by God in Genesis. In the end, he concludes that the soul was incorporeal, not consubstantial with God but a *creatio ex nihilo*, mutable but immortal (vii.28.43). He returns to this matter throughout book x (e.g., x.5.8) and ends up defending his argument that the soul is completely incorporeal against the North African Christian thinker Tertullian (*anno* ca. 155–240).

Another question to be raised here regarding the influence of Plotinus concerns Augustine's assertion in *Gen. litt.* 111.20.30–31 that the human soul was created as an intellectual entity on the angelic plane: is this a kind of Plotinian World Soul before it was divided up into individual souls? Augustine seems to accept the notion of a World-Soul in *De immortalitate animae* 15.24; *De quantitate animae* 32.68; *De ordine* 2.11.30 and *De musica* 6.15.13. See also his commentary in *Retract.* 1.11.4; R.J. Teske, 'The World Soul and Time in St. Augustine', *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983) 77–94; R.J. O'Connell, *St Augustine's Early Theory of Man AD 386–391* (Cambridge, 1968); A.H. Armstrong, 'Spiritual or Intelligible Matter in Plotinus and St. Augustine', *Augustinus Magister*, 1 (1954) 277–283, 280; J. Pépin, 'Recherches sur le sens et les origines de l'expression *caelum caeli* dans le livre xii in *Confessions* de saint Augustin', *Archivum Latinitatis Mediaevi. Bulletin de Congé*, 23 (1953) 185–274; A.I. Bouton-Touboul, *L'ordre caché. La notion d'ordre chez saint Augustin* (Paris, 2004).

whole existence, as well as its entire knowledge or wisdom, is a gift from the Creator. In Plotinus' teachings, the movement of conversion ἐπιστροφή, receiving the illumination and formation of the Νοῦς⁸⁴ is incorporated in the human intellect as well, in imitating the divine Intellect contemplating the One (or even the Ideas). Augustine depicts a similar process: the human image turns to contemplate its exemplar, the *Verbum*, and in doing so, it contemplates the Creator's Ideas (subsequently imitating the angels as well). In this way, it becomes formed.

Another parallel in the *Enneads* is the idea that the human νοῦς, by contemplating the Intellect's Ideas and becoming illuminated by the divine Νοῦς, will progressively become godlike, a state in which the soul realizes its true self. We see this echoed in Augustine's doctrine as well: that by acquiring divine knowledge, the image is gradually re-formed, and is transformed to the truer and more Christ-like self.

The influence of Plotinus on Augustine's doctrine of contemplation and epistemology will be dealt with more extensively in Chapter 7. In Augustine's doctrine of image of God in *Gen. litt.*, the intellect is depicted as image of Christ, the Creator, the second Trinitarian person (parallel to the second Hypostasis of Plotinus). Yet it is truly an image of the Holy Trinity. In *Trin.*, he delineated the imaging of the intellect with the whole Trinitarian Godhead, parallel to Plotinus' depiction of the human soul's imaging of the three regions of the All Soul and ultimately the three Hypostases. Yet in *Trin.*, Augustine also explicates further the imaging of the human intellect of the *Verbum*, in particular his life on Earth.

In his entire treatment of the *imago Dei* in *Gen. litt.* III.20.30, Augustine was intricately integrating verses from the apostle Paul's letters with Plotinian philosophy. Paul's statements which inspired Augustine's doctrine of the image of God were those such as 'Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who is being renewed unto the knowledge of God, according to the image of his Creator.'⁸⁵ 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.' (Rom. 12:2). These seem to fit seamlessly into Plotinus' thinking. Augustine's critique of Platonists in *Conf.* VII–VIII was that they knew where God was (in other words, that He was imma-

84 The Plotinian influence on Augustine's notion of *conversio* is discussed by Vannier, *Creatio-Conversio-Formatio*, 11–14. As Plotinian sources she cites: *Enn.* 11.4.5.34 (light originating from other light); III.4.1.8–11, III.8.3.11 and III.8.4.

85 The quote from Paul is Augustine's own translation of Eph. 4:23–24 and Col. 3:10 in *Gen. litt.* III.20.30. For other references of Paul heavily utilized by Augustine, see note 71.

terial, transcendent and above the human intellect) but they did not know how to get there. In other words, in his mind, they missed essential anthropological insights, such as the weakness of the human will, and how to amend one's sinful nature—through the grace of Christ. Christ-as Incarnation of the second divine Trinitarian person—was of course completely missing in their philosophy. The knowledge of a divine healer who had himself suffered under the same conditions as humans was indispensable, according to Augustine, in order to ascend to God. This brings us to the next aspect of Augustine's doctrine of the human image.

3.2.4 *Imago Dei*, Original Sin and Human Nature

3.2.4.1 *Introduction*

Having established the origin of the soul in the realm of the angels in *Gen. litt.* III.20.31, Augustine confirmed that this soul signifies the *imago Dei*, the intellect which was created as a causal principle *ratio*. Then he referred to his exegesis of Adam and Eve as having committed original sin. 'For after original sin, man is renewed in the knowledge of God according to the image of his Creator. Similarly, before he grew old by sin, he was created in that knowledge in which he would subsequently be renewed.' This interesting quote requires elucidation. To begin with, Augustine treats original sin later in *Gen. litt.* VI.19.30, etc., where he continues expounding his doctrine of the *imago Dei* in the context of the fall of Adam and Eve and his eschatology. Here, Augustine utilizes the words of Paul concerning the *imago Dei* and his idea of the 'first and second Adam' (See note 97 on 'the second Adam'). Because Augustine's further treatment of sin in *Gen. litt.* is laden with complexities and inquiries which are not relevant here, a short exposé of his doctrine will suffice, derived from different books in *Gen. litt.*, different exegeses of Genesis or *Trin.*, where the same general conceptions are stated more coherently.⁸⁶

3.2.5 Original Sin and the Human Will

The first humans were created as images of God, but because of their disobedience to God, Augustine claims, their image was lost (*Gen. litt.* VI.27.38).⁸⁷ Orig-

86 *Gen. litt.* is not the most suitable work for studying Augustine's doctrine of the will. It is included here because it is useful for its context in the doctrine of the *imago Dei* within his exegesis of Genesis and his cosmology. *Trin.* explains *voluntas* more clearly in the context of the *imago Trinitatis*. Many other works give a more complete depiction of Augustine's notions of will and grace (such as *De libero arbitrio*, *Conf.* VII.1.5.10–12, 8.20, 9.21 and 10.22—related to Adam, 10.23–24).

87 Augustine corrected himself in *Retract.* II.24.2, emphasizing that the image could never

nally created as immortals, their immortality, too, was lost (VI.20.31). Augustine sees Adam's behavior as a reflection of universal human nature, an inherent inclination towards sin. God's punishment of Adam at his expulsion from paradise applies to the whole human race living in post-paradisiacal times. Concerning the curse of God as punishment in Gen. 3:17–18, Augustine writes: 'But if anything is certain, nobody may escape this sentence. The very fact after all, that everyone born into this life finds the search of truth impeded by the perishable body, is that what is meant by the toil and grief which the man gets from earth ...' (*Gen. adu. Man.* 11.20.30). This passage describes God's curse as the cause of mankind's hardships: that is, the human tendency to persistently search for ultimate divine truth in physical existence which is a futile pursuit.

In *Conf.* VII–VIII, Augustine pointed to the source of sin and evil in the world as primarily the human mind, namely the will.⁸⁸ He emphasized the errors of the Platonists by arguing that the human soul is not capable of keeping her concentration on God for any length of time (while ascending to God) because the will is weak and requires God's grace in order to stay focused upon truth and to consciously carry out God's will. Here, as well, he emphasized man's propensity for sin which inevitably led to the inability to remain focused on God. In *Civ. Dei*, Augustine described man's debility after original sin, among other things, his weak will, as no longer having sufficient rational control over the body (XIV.10, 16–17, 23–24). As a result of their disobedience, Adam and Eve became ashamed of their genitals, of their sexual lust, the latter of which now competed for the dominion of their wills. Sin, however, according to Augustine, did not derive exclusively from the fact that Adam had a physical body. Augustine illustrated the sinfulness of mankind by the general inclination to turn away (*aversio Dei*) from the Creator and forget or even deny their dependence on God.⁸⁹ Humans

be lost, only disfigured. In *Trin.*, he stated that the image had been deformed by the sin originally committed by Adam and not lost. I think the change of terms—from lost to deformed—had to do with a rewording of his doctrine. In none of his works, did he elaborate on what the consequences would be if the image were actually lost. In his doctrine of sin, he stressed that every soul had the inclination to sin, even angels and saints.

88 Treated in Chapter 2.1. See also Rist, *Ancient Thought Baptized*, 92–148.

89 'So then they (1Z: Adam and Eve) hide themselves from themselves, in order to be troubled with miserable errors after forsaking the light of truth, which they themselves were definitely not. The human soul, after all, can participate in truth, but Truth itself is God, unchanging above the soul. So then, turn away if you will from the Truth and turn to yourself, and exult in your own seemingly free movements rather than in being directed and enlightened by God; but you will be plunged in the darkness of falsehood, since whoever speaks falsehood is speaking from what is his own. And so you will be troubled in that way, and illustrate the truth of the prophet's words: My soul is troubled at myself (Ps. 42: 26).' (*Gen. adu. Man.* 11.16.24).

therefore do not have the strength to do what they truly long to do (as stated in Rom. 7: 19–20). Even though a person desires to remain attached to God, to carry out God's will, to do good for their neighbor or for mankind as a whole, most people end up choosing instead what is good only for themselves and gratifying primarily one's own needs (*Trin.* XII.10.15). This will be elaborated in the next point on sin and love. Augustine's doctrine of sin and original sin is thus deeply ingrained in his view of the human will and consequently with the post-lapsarian circumstances of the *imago Dei*. Noteworthy in this context is his exegesis of the *imago Dei* in *Gen. litt.* (III.20.30–32). In the movement of *conversio Dei*, Augustine demonstrated what he perceived as a good functioning human 'will' as focused on God. Augustine's depiction of the good will has to do with 'being free to choose'. 'Freedom' is for Augustine a state in which one is liberated from sin and evil. Yet the only way to achieve this state is to act while consciously engaged with God.⁹⁰

As is evident here, Augustine's conception of the human will is a complex feature of his anthropology with various layers of meanings depending upon the context in which he treats it. In *Trin.* for example, he describes the best image of the Holy Trinity as a collaboration of three factors in the human mind in the state of remembering, understanding and willing or loving God. As such, he ties his notion of will *voluntas* into the conception of love *amor*, as in equivocating 'desiring and willing'. Additionally, love and will were both deemed as immaterial substances of the mind.⁹¹ These are important aspects in *Trin.*, but in the Genesis commentaries, the equality of love and will is not present, at least not in the context of the *imago Dei*. Hence Augustine's concept of *voluntas* is an intricate issue with numerous difficulties which go beyond the scope of this research.⁹² Augustine's doctrine of *voluntas* will not be explored in the comparison with Plotinus,⁹³ only his terms for the element 'love' will require our attention. For that reason, we will proceed further with the topic of sin in

90 J. Rist, 'Augustine on Free Will and Destination', in: Markus, *Augustine A Collection*, 218–252. As Rist explains, Augustine's conception of *voluntas* is not the equivalent to that which we refer to today, the will as a 'faculty of the mind'.

91 Rist on Augustine's free will ('Free Will'); *ibidem*, *Ancient Thought Baptized*, 148–202; *ibidem*, *Augustine Deformed*, Chapters 1–3; S.E. Beyers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine, A Stoic-Platonic synthesis* (Cambridge, 2003) 88–99; C. Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford, 2000) 88–106.

92 See the authors above and Rist, *Augustine Deformed*, Chapters 1–3; M. Djuth, 'Will', *AttA*, 881–885; P. Rigby 'Original Sin', *AttA*, 607–614; C. Horn, 'Anthropologie', 481, *ibidem*, *Augustinus* (Munich, 1995, 2013) 132–137 (1995).

93 See the publications of Rist ('Free Will') and Beyers in the notes above in which the Stoic influence on Augustine's and Plotinus' notion of will is delineated.

the context of love and knowledge, as these two elements in the Genesis commentaries foreshadow his interpretation of the *imago Trinitatis* in *Trin.*, which are of utmost relevance for studying Augustine interest in Plotinian philosophy.

3.2.6 Sin and Pride in the Context of Love and Knowledge

In *Conf.*, Augustine emphasized that the ascent to God demanded knowledge of human nature and of the psychological factors which obstructed the faithful from becoming a better image of God or more godlike. One of which was the sin of pride, which was, according to Augustine's exegesis of Genesis, Adam's first sin.⁹⁴ 'Next, as is the way with pride, he (LZ: Adam) doesn't plead guilty to being the woman's accomplice, but instead puts all the blame for his own fault on the woman ... And when the woman is questioned she puts the blame on the serpent.' (*Gen. adu. Man.* 11.17.25). Adam's pride prevented him from seeing his own wrongdoings, blaming the other even though he himself sinned. His arrogance was also prevalent in his wish to equal God by obtaining the forbidden knowledge of the tree of life. In this way, Augustine explained, Adam was 'in love with his own superiority'. Hence Adam's self-centeredness and egoism were essentially one and the same with original sin. This is also explained further in his distinction of two kinds of loves in *Gen. litt.* XI.15.20, likewise in the context of Adam and Eve's sins. The first kind of love is holy, social—'taking thought of common good because of companionship in the upper regions'. It is calm, peaceable, content with God's truth; friendly and desiring for those close to us what one desires for oneself. It is allied with Justice and Goodness which manifest in the realm of the angels. The other love consists of that which is unclean, private, turbulent, rebellious, greedy for praise from others, jealous, desiring to exercise authority over one's neighbor and his possessions. Both loves are manifest in all humans, in the same way that the earthly and heavenly cities (as expounded in *Civ. Dei*) prevail in a mixed fashion in our world.⁹⁵

The themes love and knowledge also concur in the framework of his exegesis of Gen. 3.24, the expulsion from paradise, where Augustine further illustrates general human behavior exemplified by Adam and Eve. 'So God set the cherubim and the flaming sword which turns—or in one word—the flaming

94 *Gen. litt.* XI.13.17–15.19.

95 *Conf.* XIII.9.10: 'My weight is my love; wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire and carried upwards; we grow red hot and ascend. We climb "the ascent in our heart" (Ps. 83:6) and sing "the song of steps" (Ps. 119:1). Lit by your fire, your good fire, we grow red hot and ascend, as we move upwards "to the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 121:1). There we will be brought to our place by a good will, so that we want nothing but to stay there forever.' (Chadwick).

whirling sword to guard the way to the tree of life'. (*Gen. adu. Man.* 11.23.35). Augustine interprets the meaning of 'cherubim' in Hebrew allegorically, in that it signifies 'fullness of knowledge'. This recalls his exegesis of the *imago Dei* in *Gen. litt.* (111.20.30–32), the perfect knowledge of God of the angels as a result of their formation in the first phase of creation. Likewise, he underlined there the importance of divine knowledge, the same knowledge which the angels had acquired, for the renewal of the human soul or image. 'Flaming whirling sword' from the quote above is understood by Augustine as obstacles, such as: '... temporal punishments and pains, since time goes whirling and spinning along. The tree of life is being guarded by fullness of knowledge and the flaming sword ... Yes, but putting up with troubles is something that practically everyone who is stretching out to the tree of life has to undergo in this life, while the fullness of knowledge seems to fall to the lot of the far fewer people.' (*Gen. adu. Man.* 11.22.36.)

Hence, by striving to obtain the fullness of knowledge on their own volition, Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Instead of gaining knowledge, they were punished with hardships. Consequently, Augustine says, humans will neither attain complete divine knowledge in this lifetime. At the end of time, it will indeed be obtained, yet only after enduring the adversities of this life. What is utmost significant here is the continuation of this passage in which he equates the restoration of the fullness of knowledge by means of loving God and one's neighbor, quoting Paul and Matthew.

"But the fullness of the law is charity" (Rom. 13:10). And let us see this same love in that twin commandment: You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and your whole soul and with your whole mind and You shall love your neighbor as yourself; on these two commandments hangs the whole law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37, 39–40). Then we can take it without the slightest hesitation that one does not only come to the tree of life through the flaming, whirling sword, that is, through the endurance of temporal troubles, but also through the fullness of knowledge, that is through charity, because "if I do not have charity, he says, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2).

Gen. adu. Man. 11.22.36

We see here how Augustine introduced the aspect of love and knowledge into his doctrine of the *imago Dei* in his Genesis commentaries, albeit in a remote manner. Implied here is that loving God and others will counteract the negative effects of original sin thus contribute to the renewal of one's image of God and the acquisition of wisdom. In Chapter 5.3, we will see how Augustine draws

the theme of love to the foreground of his doctrine, deeming it as a substantial element of the human mind. Loving God, self and others are essential to the development of the *imago Trinitatis*.

3.2.7 *Imago Dei*: Eschatology and the Resurrection

To deal with Augustine's eschatology, a concise summary of what has been treated so far is indispensable. According to Augustine, the sins which humans inherited from our original ascendants were what brought them unhappy and broken lives. Human existence was tainted not only by the sin of Adam of Eve but also by the curse of God at their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. These are propagated into posterity when people today imitate Adam and Eve's choosing to protect themselves, denying all blame and responsibility for their sinful actions. Over-estimation of oneself, an exclusive self-orientation or pursuing unhealthy, futile loves as the result of a sick will, pertain to original sin as well. Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* instructed the inevitability of human sinning in one's life on earth which led to unrest and discontent. His doctrine of sin here served as another one of his explanations for *unde malum*, the source of evil in the world, in continuation of *Conf.* VII–VIII.

Hence, at the time of Adam and Eve's fall, the image of God was damaged and remained damaged ever since. Augustine stated that we may be able to damage our image of God by ourselves but we cannot restore it alone.⁹⁶ A gradual renewal of the image (the highest region of the soul) was possible in this life through the grace of Christ (*Gen. litt.* IX.18.33). Augustine even demonstrated how the healed will functioned: by *conversio*, *formatio* and *illuminatio*: by orienting the mind to the light of the Eternal Word, receiving divine knowledge, truth and wisdom by which the image and its resemblance to God could be restored little by little. Progressive renewal of the deformed image occurred by one's conscious practice of turning daily or as much as possible to Christ, acknowledging one's sins and confessing them to the Lord.

Now we arrive finally at Augustine's eschatology. This may be brief, yet it is of utmost importance to his doctrine of the *Imago Dei* in *Gen. litt* and *Trin.*: the complete renewal of the image is highly unlikely in this lifetime. The renewal and retrieval of the soul's immortality, as well as the re-formation or re-creation of the image will occur at the time of resurrection in the afterlife by the second Adam, Christ, the *Verbum Dei*.⁹⁷ At that time, saintly human images will enjoy

96 'It cannot reform itself in the way it was able to deform itself.' 'And thus the image begins to be reformed by him who formed it in the first place.' (*Trin.* XIV.16.22).

97 *Gen. litt.* VI.19.30–24.35. These statements, inspired by Paul, concern the first man, Adam, who was made as an ensouled body, the body being made from dust of the earth. The sec-

a restored relationship with God, attain a complete vision of him and be able to contemplate him without end. Their knowledge of God will equal that of the angels.⁹⁸ What this beatific vision of God entails exactly is disclosed in Augustine's depiction of the ascent in intellectual vision.

3.2.8 Similarities to Plotinus' Doctrine of Sin

When Augustine relayed in *Conf.* VII.20.26 his attempt to ascend to God in the Platonist manner, he explained several causes as to why he was not able to remain in God's light: the soul's attachment to the body, which weighed the soul down, his own lack of humility and the darkness of his own soul (VII.21.27). Pride, as Adam's original sin, was for Augustine the first stumbling block which prevented the soul from fully experiencing God. The Platonists' lack of recognition of how important humility was for the ascent was in his eyes a serious doctrinal defect. They were ignorant of Christ's Incarnation which exemplified his humility. Augustine also stressed that the origin of evil in the world was in the human soul; the will was diseased, because it consistently turned its back on God. One needed Christ to provide atonement and to heal the will to be able to attain happiness and salvation. Thus the awareness of Christ's Incarnation, at least for these reasons, was for Augustine indispensable for contemplating the divine. Apart from this major difference in Augustine's thinking—Christ as intermediary in his depiction of the ascent—, Augustine's notion of sin is in many ways comparable to that of Plotinus. To illustrate this, two topics will be discussed here: the sin of pride and the human will as the origin of sin.

In spite of the fact that the great Platonist was reputedly a humble and tolerant man, as Porphyry told us in *The Life of Plotinus*, his *Enneads* did not treat human pride to the extent that Augustine did. On the other hand, Plotinus' conception of τόλμα does approach this to some degree.⁹⁹ Τόλμα or audacity,¹⁰⁰ is

ond Adam, being of pure spirit and from heaven, is Christ. Paul's words are: 'And just as we have put on the image of the earthly one, so let us also put on the image of him who is from heaven.' (1 Cor. 15: 44–49). Augustine interprets this in the following way: 'So now we bear the image of the heavenly man by faith due to have in the resurrection what we now believe. But we have worn the image of the earthly man from the starting point of the human race.' (*Gen. litt.* IV.23.40). What follows here is a lengthy discussion of Adam's original state, the pristine state of the *imago Dei* before sin (see also IV.25.42). Augustine then questions what kind of state this image will be in after the resurrection. His answer is that human knowledge will not be perfect until the image is fully formed, thereby becoming equivalent to the angels, seeing God as he truly is, quoting Paul: 'For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.' 1 Cor 13: 12 (translation Bible Gateway).

98 *Gen. litt.* IV.23.40, 24.41, VII.21.30.

99 *Enn.* V.1.1, IV.8.4; Treated in Chapter 3.3.6: Plotinus on 'Matter, Evil, Sin and Error'.

100 'What is it, then, which has made the souls forget their father, God, and be ignorant of

similar to original sin in that it is a primeval condition which all other beings inherited. This movement first occurred at the coming of existence of Νοῦς who felt the urge to distinguish himself from the One. Thereafter, beings sought to separate themselves from their source and establish themselves as independent entities. This entailed distancing oneself from one's source and falling away from it—a kind of *aversio Dei* in Augustinian terms, which is exemplified in the following passages:

The individual souls, certainly, have an intelligent desire consisting in the impulse to return to itself, springing from the principle from which they came into being, but they also possess a power directed to the world here below, like a light which depends from the sun in the upper world, but does not grudge of its abundance to what comes after it, ... But they change from the whole to the part, and belonging to themselves, and, as if they were tired of being together, they each go on their own. Now when a soul does this for a long time, flying from the All and standing apart in distinctness, and does not look back towards the intelligible, it becomes a part and becomes isolated and weak and fusses and looks towards a part in its separation from the whole, it embarks on one single thing and flies from everything else. It comes to and turns to that one thing battered by the totality of things in every way, and has left the whole and directs the individual part with great difficulty; it is by now applying itself to and caring for things outside and is present and sinks down into the individual part ... (*Enn.* IV.8.4.1–22) ... And since the sin of the soul can refer to two things, either to the course of the descent or to doing evil when the soul has arrived here below

Enn. IV.8.5.16–18

themselves and him, even though they are parts which come from his higher world and altogether belong to it? The beginning of evil for them was audacity (τόλμα) and coming to birth and the first otherness and the wishing to belong to themselves. Since they were clearly delighted with their own independence, and made great use of self-movement, running the opposite course and getting away as far as possible, they were ignorant even that they themselves came from that world; just as children, who are immediately torn away from their parents and brought up far away do not know who they themselves or their parents are. Since they do not anymore see their father or themselves, they despise themselves through ignorance of their birth and honour other things, admiring everything rather than themselves, and astonished and delighted by and dependent on these (earthly) things, they broke themselves loose as far as they could in contempt of that from which they turned away.' (*Enn.* V.I.1.1–17).

Plotinus indicates here that audacity and turning away from God result in a number of sins. Self-isolation, for example, which was for him a false attitude, because no matter how separate a person believed himself to be, one was nonetheless always connected to the divine, albeit unconsciously. Self-isolation could lead to egocentricity, which in turn could potentially lead to evil-doings. As explained in section 3, this was generally Augustine's interpretation of the fall of Adam in a nutshell:¹⁰¹ as a result of his weakness, Adam disobeyed God by renouncing, as it were, his dependency on the Father. This led to a life of isolation (expulsion from paradise) and hardships (the curses of God).¹⁰²

Augustine's conception of sin can be illustrated in the quote below, depicting the bad will falling or turning away from God. In this context, Augustine is referring to Lucifer, the fallen angel, as the epitome of evil, whose sins hardly differ than those of Adam. 'It is the general practice to inquire more minutely into the devil's own nature, ... a bad will is one that is inordinately disposed to prefer lower goods to higher ones; and that thus it came to pass that a spirit of the rational creation, delighting in its own power, as surpassing that of all other creatures, became swollen with pride and thereby fell from the bliss of spiritual paradise and was eaten up by jealousy.' (*Gen. litt.* XI.13.17).¹⁰³ Although Plotinus did not mention demons here as the cause of evil in the world, the passage from the *Enneads* above resembles Augustine's words here, in that it involved a preference for lower or exterior things of the world to the higher goods of God, which essentially results in suffering and other adversities.

Plotinus recognized the problem of the human will which caused sin and evil, in directing its love and desire to matter and the world, as well as excessively to oneself (Chapter 3.3). The will was associated with the notion of ἐπιστροφή—which is equivalent to Augustine's *conversio*, which likewise involved the will. In Plotinus' cosmology, turning to the source to contemplate it was first instigated by Νοῦς. This action was imitated by the higher Soul and the World Soul, who also turned to contemplate their superior source. Yet Nature-Soul, as well as the individual souls below, were not so adept at contemplation (see Chapter 3.2). Being more prone to the material world and physicality, they were mostly turned in the wrong direction. As such, they tended to wholly forget their origin. These aspects were clearly demonstrated in the quote from the *Enneads* above (and in the quote in note 100). Forgetting one's origin

101 *Gen. litt.* XI.15.20; *Gen. adu. Man.* 11.16.24.

102 *Gen. litt.* XI.35.47–38.51.

103 See also *Gen. litt.* XI.14.18 and 15.19.

for Plotinus potentially led to sin and illusory thinking. These aspects proved to be obstacles for the human soul to actualize her intellect, which otherwise possessed a natural connection to the divine.

Augustine likely read these insights in the *Enneads* and approved of them. They were evident in his doctrine of sin, yet his doctrine contained different accentuations, due to his orientation to exegesis of biblical stories. Turning away from God for both Augustine and Plotinus essentially encompassed the belief that the material world was the sole reality. Turning to the world or to the body in search of ultimate truth was for both thinkers tragically illusory. Both thinkers endorsed the idea that the visual world with its material images could not supply the mind with ultimate truth. It would only provide knowledge of a transient and illusory character. There are only slight differences between the two as regards how the human seeking union with God should deal with the world. The discussion of this topic will resume in Chapter 7.4.1 ('Augustine's Reception of Plotinus' Epistemology') in a more global comparison of the doctrines of intellect of Augustine and Plotinus.

4 The Ascent: The Soul's Vision and Contemplation of the Ideas

4.1 Introduction

At Augustine's first reading of the Platonic books,¹⁰⁴ he experimented with their 'inward turn'. He could perceive God's light above his own mind, the immaterial light of the Creator, which he could differentiate from the light of his own soul. Yet he was unable to remain in this light for longer than a few instances. Throughout *Conf.* there are at least four or five of these ascent experiences to God's light, each with its own accent.¹⁰⁵ Augustine's depictions were appropriately labeled 'Platonic ascents',¹⁰⁶ as they generally followed the exact

104 *Conf.* VII.10.16–12.18; See Chapter 2.1.

105 *Conf.* VII.17.23; vision at Ostia: IX.10.23; X.8.12, XI.9.11.

106 For example: 'And so step-by-step I ascended from bodies to the soul which perceives through the body and from there to its inward force to which bodily senses report external sensations, this being as high as beasts go. From there again I ascended to the power of reasoning to which it is to be attributed the power of judging the deliverances of the bodily senses. This power, which in myself I found to be mutable, raised itself to the level of its own intelligence and led my thinking out of the ruts of habit. It withdrew itself from the contradictory swarms of imaginative fantasies, so as to discover the light by which it was flooded. At the point, it had no hesitation in declaring that the unchangeable is preferable to the changeable ... So in the flash of a trembling glance it attained to that which "is". At that moment I saw your "invisible nature" and understood through the things which are

same pattern as those of Plotinus: the ascent began with beauty perceived at the sense level, moving one's perception from outer, material things, to one's own thought processes, progressing further to the depths of the soul, eventually contemplating God or the eternal Ideas in their pure, immaterial manifestation in the Intellect while being illuminated by God above. (In Plotinus' account however, the soul ascended beyond *Noûs* to the One.)

The descriptions of Augustine's ascent differed from those of Plotinus in that he was quick to express his disappointment that he was not able to hold his focus on that Light for any length of time as he yearned to do. The inability to stay attuned to divine illumination, he expounded, was a result of the infirmity of the will, which required Christ's grace to heal it; both were consequences of original sin. Yet he also attributed the inability to remain attached to the divine to the soul's inseparable relationship to its body, which hindered the rational soul's power to dominate the body's urges. The necessity to attend to physical needs keeps humans preoccupied with the ontologically lower material realm, thus distracted from God.

Because of the importance of the contemplation of Ideas, we will now depart from *Conf.* and turn to the works where these principles are explicitly dealt with.¹⁰⁷ Earlier in this chapter, the essay *De Ideis* was referred to as Augustine's only exposition on the Ideas. This was an early work (ca. 394–395) in which he defined the eternal Form principles instrumental in God's creation act.¹⁰⁸ The notion of the divine Ideas (or *Rationes*) was essential to his definition of the soul as *ratio*, which in turn, was at the heart of his conception of the term *imago Dei* as the rational soul (*mens*).¹⁰⁹ In the latter exposition, the *imago Dei* was that region of the soul capable of turning to and experiencing God's light, a capacity which derived from the soul having originated in the realm of the angels, the *caelum caeli*. The angels were also intensely involved with the Ideas. At the time of the first creation phase, the angels contemplated their Creator 'in action' as it were and subsequently acquired a complete knowledge of his Ideas and of how the creation was accomplished. Thus the rational soul was able to imitate this angelic movement, by turning to God to contemplate Him

made. But I did not possess the strength to keep my vision fixed. My weakness reasserted itself and I returned ...' (*Conf.* VII.17.23—translation Chadwick, 1992).

107 It is peculiar that in *Conf.*, Augustine did not mention the contemplation of the Ideas in his accounts of the ascent to divine Light. The eternal Forms are mentioned as causal, eternal creation principles in I.6.9; elsewhere fleetingly or by inference such as in XII.3.3, 6.6, 8.8, 13.16, 16.23, 20.29, 29.40; and XIII.2.2, 4.5, 20.27, 33.48. These examples deal predominantly with the Creator transforming formlessness to form.

108 *Div. qu.* 46: *De Ideis*.

109 Introduced in sections 2.2, 2.4 and 2.5 of this chapter. *Gen. litt.* XII.20.30–31.

and/or his intelligible world. The contemplation of the Ideas was also relevant in Augustine's eschatology, in which he posited that at the resurrection in the afterlife, holy souls or images of God will be perfected and acquire the same knowledge as the angels: the full spectrum of the Ideas in a complete, divine vision. These themes: knowledge of God, divine visions and contemplating the Ideas, will be the main subjects of this section on the ascent. We will begin with the essay *De Ideis* because it provides the foundation for Augustine's accounts of the ascent in *Gen. litt.*

4.2 *Contemplation of the Ideas and the Ascent in De Ideis*

This essay only mentions the highest part of the soul as the rational soul (*mens*) but not the *imago Dei*. '... every soul but the rational is denied the power to contemplate these Ideas. This the rational soul can do by that part of itself wherein lies its excellence, i.e., by the mind and reason, as if by a certain inner and intelligible countenance, indeed, an eye of its own.' Thus, Augustine says, only the highest part of the soul can contemplate the Ideas, it is the most excellent because of its reasoning facility. The rational soul is the mind's eye. Contrasted with the physical eyes which only visualize the particular, individual images of the Ideas, the mind's eye, in other words, the *imago Dei*, is that with which one is able to discern the temporal images from the eternal Ideas. It can also experience divine visions:

And indeed, not any and every rational soul is prepared for that vision, but rather, the soul which is holy and pure. It is this soul which is claimed to be fit for that vision, i.e., which has that very eye with which the ideas are seen—an eye sound, pure, serene, and like those things which it endeavors to see. (1) ... Now among the things which have been created by God, the rational soul is the most excellent of all, and it is closest to God when it is pure. And in the measure that it has clung to him in love, in that measure, imbued in some way and illumined by him with light, intelligible light, the soul discerns—not with physical eyes, but with its own highest part—in which lies excellence, i.e., with its intelligence—those reasons whose vision brings to it full blessedness. These reasons (*Rationes*), as was said, may be called ideas, or forms or species, or reasons; and while it is the privilege of many to name them what they wish, it is the privilege of very few to see them in their reality.

De Ideis 2

The rational soul is able to contemplate the Ideas, not only because it possesses access to divine intelligibility but also because it possesses this intelligibility

itself to a certain degree.¹¹⁰ In order to contemplate the sacred Ideas in the mind of the Creator, this part of the soul must become like the things it endeavors to see: pure, sound and serene. The rational soul, the *imago Dei* or the mind's eye are designations for the region of the intellect, the soul's deepest intelligence. This is the meeting place between the human self and God or where the *mens humana* discovers its affinities with the *mens divina*. It is in this state of awareness where a relationship can unfold; or as stated in *Gen. litt.* III.20.30–31, where knowledge of God is obtained and one's image is renewed.

The sentence in *De Ideis* that the rational soul 'is the closest to God when it is pure.' requires elucidation. This involves the second type of image of which Augustine speaks in his doctrine of creation, *imagines* or *phantasmata*, which pertain to mental images derived from sense perception in the physical realm. To contemplate the divine Ideas, the mind must be purified of its attachments to physicality in the visual world. An exemplary illustration of this purification is an intriguing passage in book XII of *Gen. litt.*¹¹¹ Augustine expresses there that one's vision of the transparent truth in the region of the intelligible is obscured by 'a cloud of false opinion', referring to the images collected in the mind's memory or imagination.¹¹² This corresponds to Augustine's theory of

110 In *Gen. litt.* XII.10.21, Augustine equates the term *intellectualis* with *intelligibilis*, underlining the close connection between the human intellect and the intelligible world of Ideas.

111 *Gen. litt.* XII.26.54: 'Moreover, if a man has not only been carried out of the bodily senses to be among the likenesses of the bodies seen by the spirit, but is also carried out of the latter to be conveyed as it were, to the region of the intellectual or intelligible, where transparent truth is seen without any bodily likenesses, his vision is darkened by no cloud of false opinion, and there the virtues of the soul are not tedious and burdensome. For then there is no restraining of lust by the effort of temperance, no bearing of adversity by fortitude, no punishing of wicked deeds by justice, no avoiding evil by prudence. The one virtue and the whole of virtue there is to love what you see, and the supreme happiness is to possess what you love. For there, beatitude is imbibed at its source, whence some few drops are sprinkled upon this life of ours, that amid the trials of this world, we may spend our days with temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence. It is surely in pursuit of this end, where there will be secure peace and the unutterable vision of truth, that man undertakes the labor of restraining his desires, of bearing adversities, of relieving the poor, of opposing deceivers. There the brightness of the Lord is seen, not through a symbolic or corporeal vision, as it was seen on Mount Sinai, nor through a spiritual vision such as Isaiah saw and John in the Apocalypse, but through a direct vision and not through a dark image (*sed per speciem, non per aenigmata*), as far as the human mind elevated by the grace of God speaks face to face to him whom He has made worthy of this communion. And here we are speaking not of the face of the body but that of the mind.' (Taylor). (Augustine is describing here an intellectual vision increasing in intensity to a full blown *visio Dei*. See notes 125 and 134.)

112 See *Conf.* VII.17.23: the purification of physicality; *ibidem*, x.17.26: going beyond memory and the self to touch God; *ibidem*, x.27.38: God and true happiness are beyond the realm

the three visions in *Gen. litt.* XII (to be treated below), where he establishes an existential hierarchy in the creation. Immaterial, intelligible objects encompass ultimate truth and are superior to corporeal and spiritual images *phantasmata* or *imagines*. The latter modes of vision are susceptible to false interpretation and illusion. On the other hand, these material images are of utmost importance because they are the stuff of knowledge which the mind processes in order to form ideas and knowledge.¹¹³

What this amounts to is that the activity of contemplating the Ideas in itself is a means of further purification. The purifying nature is especially clear when we ponder what precisely this knowledge of the Ideas consists of. It includes the causal rational principles by which the Creator made the world.¹¹⁴ Important here is the realization that their source is the Creator himself. Augustine says that we know the Ideas already to some extent by their particular images in our world. In this way, knowledge of the Ideas is latent in the human mind. Yet the eternal Ideas are not just intelligible notions with material counterparts as images. They can also include divine Virtues (which we would call Ideals), such as Prudence, Justice, Chastity and Piety.¹¹⁵ Elsewhere, he indicates others: conceptions such as Beauty, Goodness, Chastity, Wisdom and Truth (*Div. qu.* 23, etc.). The Forms are also referred to as the eternal and unchangeable laws of God (*Civ. Dei* IX.22), principles of cosmic order and the source of numerical and aesthetic form (*Div. qu.* 78). There could be one Form for all human beings, but not necessarily for all individuals.¹¹⁶

As a final note on *De Ideis*, the indebtedness to Plotinus' conception of contemplation of the Ideas in this work is easily detectable.¹¹⁷ This essay is an early work and gives a similar account of the ascent as those of the Neo-Platonist: an 'easy ascent' to the Light without further analysis of the 'problems underway'. There is also no mention of the necessity of Christ's grace or the ontological differentiation between the Creator and creature. Nor are there any biblical references. This might also be due to the fact that Augustine intended this treatment as a succinct introduction or that his notion of the infirmity of the will had not yet coagulated.

of creatures. Sin, or the error man makes, is assuming that only the material, visual realm provides existential truths (*Gen. litt.* XII.36.69).

113 *Scientia* and *sapientia*: e.g., *Conf.* X.8–13; *Trin.* XII.15.25. During intellectual vision, the Ideas are contemplated. *Gen. litt.* XII.26.53, 28.56 and 35.52.

114 Also in *Gen. litt.* IV.32.49.

115 *Gen. litt.* XII.17.34; Justice: e.g., *Trin.* VIII.6.9.

116 As Plotinus sometimes suggested: e.g., *Enn.* V.7. See also note 49.

117 For the influence of Plotinus on *De Ideis* as well as other suggested sources, see e.g., J. Pépin, 'Augustin, *Quaestio*' and Solignac, 'Analyse et sources', 307–315.

Now we shall return to *Gen. litt.* and proceed to book XII on Augustine's theory of the three visions. Augustine's theory of the three visions provides an excellent example of one of Augustine's 'epistemological ascents'. We find here clear parallels to Plotinus' characteristics of the human intellect νοῦς. His description of the *visio intellectualis* supplements his conception of the rational soul-*mens-intellectus* and tells us much about the mindset of the *imago Dei*.

4.3 Visio Intellectualis in De genesi ad litteram XII

4.3.1 The Context of Augustine's Theory of the Three Visions

Before exploring Augustine's notion of intellectual vision, brief attention should be given to the context in which his theory occurs. Prior to book XII, Augustine had been involved with an exegesis of the creation story in Genesis. At the close of book XI, Augustine discusses Adam and Eve, their sin and their expulsion from paradise. In the beginning of book XII, Augustine announces that he is going to focus on one aspect which came up frequently in his exegesis which requires a separate elucidation. 'Now we will speak at our leisure of the question of paradise ...' He turns—not to the story in Genesis—but to the second book of Corinthians (12:24) in which St. Paul mentions someone¹¹⁸ who was 'caught up in third heaven', or 'caught up into Paradise and heard secret words that man may not repeat.'¹¹⁹ The question at large for Augustine is whether or not paradise is located in this 'third heaven'. He asks, is this third heaven where Paul was carried away to (*quo raptus est*), a spiritual or physical place? (XII.1.2) This question leads him to explicate the phenomenon of divine revelations which are reported in the bible.¹²⁰ Book XII is hence geared to explaining these visions in their relevance to Paul's mentioning of paradise.

4.3.2 Augustine's Definition of Three Visions

The first type of vision concerns seeing 'corporeal images' (XII.2.3) *visio corporalis*, from our physical sense perception. These images differ from those which appear in our minds similar to recollections, visualizations or dreams.¹²¹ Images of this kind resemble the things which we have seen or experienced in the physical world. Augustine gave these the perplexing term 'spiritual vision' or *visio*

118 For Augustine it is obvious that Paul is referring to himself here.

119 *Gen. litt.* XII.1.1. Taylor's translation.

120 To illustrate these three visions, Augustine uses various examples of visions told in the bible, such as: Paul, who saw paradise; the dish descending from heaven appearing to Peter (Acts 10:11); John's visions of the Apocalypse (Apoc. 1:13–20); in Ezek. (37:1–10), the plain with the bones of the dead and their resurrection; in Isaiah: God seated before him, the seraphim and the altar from which the coal was taken to cleanse the lips of the prophet.

121 Treated in section 2 'Definition of Image'.

spiritualis. The term 'spiritual' (XII.7–9)¹²² here refers to the human spirit in its distinction to physicality in the material world, pertaining to the first type of vision. The term is also used to differentiate the lower from the higher parts of the mind, and in this case, from the higher, the intellect, which pertains to the third type, intellectual vision. In spiritual vision, a state of rapture can occur (XII.5.13, 4.9). This can also occur in a *visio intellectualis*, which Augustine characterizes in a number of ways. One of the ways is the mind being *carried out of the bodily senses* in order to transcend the images appearing in corporeal and spiritual visions (XII.26.54). Thereby a vision is obtained in which the deeper significance of the content of the first two types of visions is immediately grasped. An intellectual vision consists exclusively of true knowledge,¹²³ in contrast to the first two visions which are susceptible to erroneous judgment or *clouds of false opinion* (as quoted in note 111). Additionally, intellectual vision understands, interprets and judges spiritual and corporal visions.¹²⁴ One's mind is elevated 'to the region of the intellectual or intelligible, where transparent truth is seen without any bodily likenesses', to the region of pure Ideas, such as Virtues which have no physical counterparts. 'The one virtue and the whole of virtue there, is to love what you see and the supreme happiness is to pos-

122 In *Gen. litt.* XII.7.18, Augustine shows how the bible sometimes uses the term *spiritus* indiscriminately and to signify different things, including those things which in Augustine's view pertain to the rational soul as image of God in the context of spiritual renewal (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:44). In Augustine's second kind of vision, it is clear that the English term 'spiritual' or even the French *esprit* will not exactly correspond with Augustine's definition of spiritual vision. See Agaësse and Solignac, *BA* 49, 342: note 10; Taylor, *Gen. litt.*, 301–302, notes 13 and 15 on Augustine's usage of the terms spirit and spiritual.

Noteworthy is that the Latin term *mens*, which is designated as the rational soul or *imago Dei*, also includes spiritual images in the imaginative faculty for memory. Augustine will make a clearer differentiation between *mens* and these material images in recollections in *Trin.* XII–XIII (e.g., in the differentiation between *scientia* and *sapientia*). See Chapter 5.3.8.8.

123 XII.14.29 (Hill)/ XII.63 (Taylor).

124 In *Gen. litt.* XII chapters 8 and 9, Augustine explains that intellectual vision is what enabled the biblical prophets to comprehend symbolic revelations. In 9.20, Augustine distinguishes between spiritual visions and prophecy. A spiritual vision with recognizable images from the experiential world is not enough to qualify as prophecy, unless it has been deciphered or interpreted by intellectual vision. Some biblical personages possessed this intellectual vision, according to Augustine, such as Joseph, who interpreted the dream of the Pharaoh, or Daniel, who interpreted the dreams of the king. 'For Pharaoh saw only a light impressed upon his spirit, whereas Joseph understood through a light given to his mind. And for this reason the former had the gift of tongues, the latter, the gift of prophecy. In the one there was the production of the images of things; in the other, the interpretation of the images produced.' (*Gen. litt.* XII.9.20).

sess what you love. An unutterable vision of truth, where beatitude is imbibed at its source ... the brightness of the Lord is seen ... through a direct vision.' (XII.26.54).¹²⁵ From this point onwards, we will concentrate solely on this *visio intellectualis*, enumerating the main points of interest in book XII, namely six specific characteristics of this vision.

4.3.3 Characteristics of the *Visio Intellectualis*

i) The superiority of intellectual vision: Augustine affirms that intellectual vision, the superior level of the soul's consciousness, can always exist without the inferior levels (spiritual and corporeal visions). But the inferior means of perception can only attain their full realization by relying on the superior level. Hence, the superiority of intellectual vision to spiritual vision is marked by its virtue of lending spiritual images their significance and effectiveness (XII.11.22, 24.51).

ii) Intellectual vision must have an object: intellectual vision entails the understanding of things which are not visible in the physical world or in our recollection of those things. Hence, its objects are things which are of truer substance and thus bear no resemblance to material images. In the passages below, Augustine illustrates the three visions with the example of love as object, dealing with the commandment, Love your neighbor as yourself.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ In *Gen. litt.* XII.27.55, Augustine includes the condition that being carried out of the physical senses in intellectual vision must entail a sort of provisional death. According to Solignac and Korger, Augustine expressed in his earlier works the view that a full vision of God, or a perfect intellectual vision while still in a physical body was only to be experienced by a certain select few, namely Moses and Paul (as described in *Gen. litt.* XII.26.54). See M.E. Korger, 'Grundprobleme der augustinischen Erkenntnislehre erläutert am Beispiel von *De genesi ad litteram* XII', *Recherches Augustiniennes*, vol. 11, 1962, 33–57, 50–51; M.E. Korger and H. von Balthasar, *Psychologie und Mystik (De Genesis ad litteram 12)* (Einsiedeln, 1960) 1–3, 5–6; and A. Solignac and P. Agaësse, 'Les trois genres de visions', *BA* 49, 575–585, 580. Madec on the other hand, correctly notes that in *Gen. litt.* book XII, Augustine simply uses Moses and Paul as biblical examples to illustrate perfect intellectual vision, without such further specification 'Savoir et voir', *Lectures Augustiniennes* (Turnhout, 2001) 221–240, 232. R. Teske discusses the *status quaestionis* of this debate and questions whether Augustine believed in the possibility of other mystics experiencing a *visio Dei* while in this life: 'Augustine and the Vision of God', in: F. van Fleteren, J.C. Schnaubelt, J. Reino (eds.) *Augustine Mystic and Mystagogue* (New York, 1994) 287–308, 296–298; See also: F. van Fleteren, 'Acies mentis', *AttA*, 5–6; Kenny, *Mysticism of Saint Augustine*, 129–145.

¹²⁶ *Gen. litt.* XII.11.22. Besides this passage, there is another reference to love in *Gen. litt.*: Augustine also says that a perfect intellectual vision—a *visio Dei* entails the ultimate bliss to possess what you love: *Gen. litt.* XII.26.54 (see quote in note 111).

When one reads ... “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”, the letters are seen with bodily vision, the neighbor thought about spiritually, love observed intellectually. But when the letters are not there in front of you, they can also be thought about spiritually and when your neighbor is present he can be seen with bodily vision, while love in its proper nature can neither be discerned with the eyes of the body, nor thought about in spirit by means of an image resembling a body but only known and perceived through the mind, that is the intellect.

XII.11.22

Here he indicates that love, as an immaterial concept, can only be truly understood by the intellect.¹²⁷ The other function of intellectual vision concerns judging corporeal images; this is possible when the mind’s object is the Ideas in Christ’s illumination. These serve as standards or norms for assessment, as to the degree of resemblance or dissemblance to God (XII.3.6, etc.).

iii) *Intellectualis* is equivalent to *intelligibilis*.¹²⁸ This enigmatic statement has to do with the relationship of the intellect to its own intelligible content. The mind sees itself, therefore the mind is intelligible to itself. This insight pertains to intellectual vision in the sense that what the intellect understands is

127 This has particular relevance in Augustine’s doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* in *Trin.* VIII–X, in his analysis of the mind in which he fuses love and knowledge together—in a triad which serves as the best Trinitarian image of God. The commandment ‘Love your neighbor’ plays a significant role in his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* in *Trin.*

128 This brief statement is a unique declaration in Augustine’s oeuvre. Although he makes references to this concept in the context of *verbum* in *Trin.* (e.g., in the context of self-knowledge in books IX–X), it is never stated so explicitly as here.

Gen. litt. XII.10.21: ‘But the intellectual type of vision, which is proper to the mind, is on a higher plane. The word “intellect” so far as I know, cannot be used in a wide variety of meanings, such as we found in the case of the word “spirit”. But whether we say “intellectual” or “intelligible”, we mean one and the same thing, though some have wished to make a distinction between the two, designating as intelligible that reality which can be perceived by the intellect alone, and as intellectual the mind which understands. But whether there exists any being perceivable by the intellect alone but not itself endowed with intellect—this is a large and difficult question. On the other hand, I do not believe there is anyone who either thinks or says that there exists a thing which perceives with the intellect and is at the same time incapable of being perceived by the intellect. For mind is not seen except by mind. Therefore, since it can be seen, it is intelligible, and since it can also see, it is intellectual, according to the distinction just mentioned. Putting aside, then, the extremely difficult question about a thing which would only be understood but not possess understanding, we here use “intellectual” and “intelligible” in the same sense.’ (Translation: Taylor).

equivalent to its intelligible objects.¹²⁹ As such, the intellect has a strong affinity with the intelligible Ideas; it does not assimilate corporeal images and therefore cannot be equal to them.

To illustrate this, let us look at a similar construction in Augustine's notion of *verbum* in *Trin.*¹³⁰ This term signifies a thought which truly reflects what the mind knows, and by definition, this thought is true, it cannot be false. This is because one's thought cannot reflect what one does not know—this is illogical. In this way, a particular thought itself can only be equal to its content. However a *verbum* pertains only to the limited truth of an individual. Intellectual vision, on the other hand, grasps universal truth, the Ideas in the *Verbum Dei*. This aspect is tied together with the next characteristic, its infallibility, discussed below.¹³¹ The passages in *Gen. litt.* on *intellectualis/intelligibilis* have provoked much discussion as to its interpretation, as well as to its source, which was originally Aristotle, yet likely transmitted to Augustine via Plotinus. In the *Enneads*, this phenomenon occurred at the level of the divine Intellect whose self-knowledge was obtained by contemplating its Ideas whereby the subject was one with its object. Plotinus specified that the perception of material images did not achieve this equality; furthermore, in the Νοῦς, discursive thought—which is bound to material images—is not possible. An immaterial entity cannot embrace something of an external, material nature and then be equal to it. (See Chapter 3.4.4.) Augustine expressed generally the same idea in *Gen. litt.* XII.7.15, although he did not treat this so explicitly or extensively as Plotinus.

iv) The infallibility of intellectual vision: *Intellectualis autem visio non fallitur* (XII.14.29 and 30). 'But there is no deception in intellectual vision; for either a person does not understand, and this is the case of one who judges something to be other than it really is, or he does understand, and then his vision is necessarily true.' The superiority of intellectual vision is likewise substantiated by

129 He explains this to some extent in *Gen. litt.* XII.7.15: 'The third kind of vision by which we see and understand love, embraces those objects which have no images resembling them which are not identical with them.'

130 Treated in Chapter 5.3; *Trin.* VIII.9.13, IX.7.12–13, 9.14, 11.16 and XV.10.17–18, 11.20, 12.22, 14.24 and chapters 15, 16, 21 and 24.

131 *Gen. litt.* XII 10.21. For further clarification of *intellectualis-intelligibilis* as well as its background and history, see: P. Agaësse and A. Solignac, "Intellectuel" et "intelligible", *BA* 49, 566–567; Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 48–52; J. Pépin, 'Une curieuse déclaration idéaliste du *De genesi ad litteram* (XII.10.21) de saint Augustin, et ses origines plotiniennes (*Ennéade* 5.3.1–9 et 5. 5.1–2)', in: *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses*, Tome XXXIV (1954) 373–400; Re-printed in *Ex Platonicorum persona. Études sur les lectures philosophiques de Saint Augustin* (Amsterdam, 1977) 181–221, 183–210.

its infallibility, as well as its capacity to judge the inferior visions which can in themselves be illusory (XII.25.52). There is no question of faith here, only an understanding of truth which is recognized immediately. A perfect intellectual vision, as experienced by the angels (see section 3.2.2) also entails an immediate and intuitive apprehension of truth, precisely as in Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect.

v) Impenetrable by demons or evil: spiritual visions can be incurred by God, angels (VIII.25.47) or even demons. Augustine explains that demons can know the spiritual images in our minds in order to deceive or manipulate us. However, demons have no power in the intellectual region of our minds and certainly not the *virtutum interna species*, the interior form of virtues which an individual has assimilated (XII.17.34). This statement is interesting in light of Augustine's critique of the Neo-Platonist practice of theurgy expressed in *Civ. Dei*.¹³² Theurgy entailed the reception of a spiritual vision by a demon, which aided an aspirant in the contemplation of God. Augustine is inadvertently underscoring his opposition to such techniques here, showing his preference for pure intellectual vision (and by doing so, concurring with Plotinus who did not advocate theurgy), in particular the vision instilled by Christ, the perfect, holy Intermediary.

vi) Visions of God and beatitude: there are several variations of intellectual vision which Augustine describes in *Gen. litt.* For example, the perfect intellectual vision of the angels which entails a total glimpse and simultaneous understanding of the whole of creation, of all creatures and their causal principles. It consists of perfect knowledge of God given by the *Verbum Dei* which is so glorious that they remain in constant praise of God as thanks.¹³³ In humans, the intellectual activity encompasses an ascent to God. It begins by transcending the physical images of the two inferior visions, progressing beyond to a region of the mind to a perfect virtuous existence, in which supreme happiness is experienced when the vision of the Lord is seen (XII.26.54. See the complete quote in note 111). Intellectual vision, which is a divine vision, is always instigated by Christ. This vision can also be accompanied by ecstasy.

Augustine's description of an intellectual vision as a perfect *visio Dei* is related to his interpretation of Paul's idea of third heaven (2 Cor. 12: 2–4), a complete vision of God face-to-face, as he believed Moses experienced in Exodus (*Gen. litt.* XII.27.55).¹³⁴ Otherwise Augustine reserves the perfect vision of

¹³² See Chapter 2.2.2.

¹³³ See section 3; i.e., *Gen. litt.* IV.29.46, 30.47.

¹³⁴ This extraordinary kind of vision entails a provisional exit from one's body or a temporary death. In discussing Paul's intellectual vision, Augustine concludes that he could not have

God for saintly persons after the death of the physical body at the resurrection. Associating the term 'paradise' with *visio Dei*, he made it equivalent to acquiring perfect beatitude, *visio beatifica*.¹³⁵

4.3.4 Augustine's Accounts of the Ascent: the *Imago Dei* and *Visio Intellectualis*

Reflecting on all the material treated thus far, we can confirm that Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* consisted essentially of the perception of oneself as image of God while engaged in an intellectual vision. This was accompanied by the contemplation of the Ideas and an ascent to God. The angelic world of pure intellect served as paradigm for the image of God, due to its constant contemplation of the *Verbum Dei* and his Ideas.

In his theory of three visions, Augustine specified the details of a complete epistemological ascent: from physical to spiritual (mental) images to an intellectual grasp of the Ideas which included the understanding of the lower two visions and simultaneously a glimpse of God's Light. Enumerated more specifically, the ascent began by turning away from the images which we perceive in the visual world in corporeal vision and inwardly to focus on ourselves. A step further upwards led the soul to the images stored in the memory or the imagination (spiritual vision). Progressing beyond those images, by judging the degree of truth they contained, the mind turned towards that which was above oneself (which was still inside oneself) to the region of intelligibility where God's Light radiated.¹³⁶ In doing so, the intellect established contact with the Creator, who was pure intelligible Light. 'But the light itself is something else, the light by which the soul is enlightened in order to truly understand and observe all things either in itself or in this light. For this light is not God himself, while the soul is a creature, even though a rational and intelligent one made to his image.' (*Gen. litt.* XII.31.59). Hence true knowledge in intellectual vision was obtained while engaged in God's Illumination, by an immediate understanding of corporeal and spiritual visions. This encompassed not only the understanding of the material images in light of their resemblance/dissemblance to their models, but also of oneself as an image of God.

In intellectual vision, the soul was turned to the Creator, it experienced a flash of consciousness of immaterial, divine reality, in rapport with the intel-

experienced the perfect vision of the angels, namely because he says that he did not know whether he was in or out of his body while in the throes of the vision (*Gen. litt.* XII.36.69).

135 E.g., *Gen. litt.* XII.28.56 and 32.60–36.69.

136 *Gen. litt.* VII.14: Augustine describes an intellectual vision enacted by the individual will, turning away from the light of one's own eyes in order to have intellectual vision.

ligible, eternal Ideas in the *Verbum Dei*. As such, at that moment it became equivalent to that what it perceived there: it also assimilated what it perceived, which was unchangeable, eternal knowledge. In doing so, it acquired a certain degree of divinity. The universal truth obtained in this vision was infallible and could never be deceptive. It would never result in sin, nor could one commit sin while experiencing this vision.

Augustine mentioned the Virtues in intellectual vision (XII.31.59) which could also be seen in oneself beside one's vices. From these passages we can infer that in intellectual vision, self-knowledge was obtained while recognizing the bitter truth of oneself, how one falls short of the Light which illuminated the intellect, which was perfect Virtue.¹³⁷ Thus the soul recognized her weaknesses, sins and impurities while in this vision. At the same time, she was aware that her capacities as intellect or image of God derived from her Creator. She realized as well her total dependence upon Him for obtaining truth, becoming formed, virtuous, pure and godlike.

As Augustine stresses in *Trin.*, the Perfect Image Himself is an object of contemplation, whom the human image consciously imitates in order to become more of a true image.¹³⁸ Here we are speaking of the Christ as the Son of God in his eternal contemplation of and love for God the Father (*Gen. litt.* I.4.9, etc.). In *Trin.*, Augustine explains the various ways in which the Incarnation of Jesus Christ serves a model for faithful to imitate (IV.1.3–3.6).

As we recall in Augustine's experiences of divine light in *Conf.*,¹³⁹ the realization of the ontological distinction between humans and God was always present in intellectual vision. The quote above (*Gen. litt.* XII.31.59) illustrates this as well. From these accounts, we can deduce that Augustine intended divine illumination to always be of short duration,¹⁴⁰ even in intellectual vision; one is weakened by the soul's natural gravitation back to the realm of corporeal images. The intensity of intellectual vision depended on the purity of one's heart and the quality of perfection of the *imago Dei* (*Gen. litt.* XII.28.56). Augus-

137 J.P. Kenny correctly remarks that moral lucidity is for Augustine a necessary condition for knowing God: in 'Augustine's understanding of religious knowledge as the exercise of interior contemplation by the soul ... the souls' moral status defines its epistemic horizon. Because the soul is inherently in the frame—as it were—of any effort to discover the divine and the transcendent, its ethical character determines not just what it might be disposed to regard as cognitively certain but what it is actually capable of knowing.' 'Faith and Reason', *CCA* (2014) 290.

138 *Trin.* VII.3.5.

139 *Conf.* VII.10.16, 17.23, 20.26; IX.10.23–26; XI.9.11.

140 'So in the flash of a trembling glance it attained to that which "is"', *Conf.* VIII.7.23; see the full quote in note 106.

tine indicated that *visio intellectualis* had various degrees and intensities. It could entail daily divine illumination (*Gen. litt.* XII.31.59) for the sake of regular renewal of the image. Augustine also described a vision which could be a perfect, direct perception of God, ‘face-to-face’ in which one attains absolute truth and ultimate beatitude (XII.26.54). This is the long-term goal of the *imago Dei*, coinciding with obtaining the complete knowledge which the angels possess.¹⁴¹ In the afterlife, at the time of the resurrection, the vision of saintly humans—images of God will be perfected by the Creator. They will obtain the full blessed vision, complete formation and perfect knowledge of God (*Gen. litt.* XII.36.69). Hence, the soul’s acquisition of divine knowledge and development did not, according to Augustine, cease after the death of one’s physical body.

The capacity with which one perceives divine Truth also depends on the grace of God, to the extent that He had made one worthy of this experience.¹⁴² In *Conf.*, Augustine recounted a similar experience as *Gen. litt.* III.20–30, in which a conscious *conversio* towards God was described, which was deemed as an act of divine grace (*Conf.* XI.9.11). He attributed his search for divine knowledge to being a response to God’s calling (XI.7.9), which was included in His foreknowledge (XI.1.1). From these passages it is evident that the true knowledge acquired in intellectual vision is for Augustine not just the fulfillment of one’s personal search but is actually a gift of God, invoked by God. God’s will and individual initiative are therefore intricately intermingled. During intellectual vision, the will is evidently functioning as it should, not in a broken manner, but optimally, consciously oriented to God, which is its true, natural state.

Regarding Augustine’s treatment of the *imago Dei*-intellect in *Gen. litt.* from a bird’s eye view, we can conclude that Augustine’s notion of image of God can be better referred to as a higher state of consciousness, a dynamic state of mind in which one acquires knowledge of God and participates increasingly in God’s light. This is differentiated from one’s ordinary state of mind of discursive thought while functioning in the world.

4.4 *The Influence of Plotinus*

We have seen many aspects of Plotinus’ cosmology and psychology pass by in this chapter: his notion of intellect as image of God, the characteristics of the

141 *Conf.* XII.13.16, XIII.15.18; *Gen. litt.* IV.23.40, 24.41, 25.42, V.20.38, VI.19.30, 21.30, XII.35.68, 36.69; *Trin.* XIV.19.25 and 26, XV.23 and 24; *Epistulae* 92, 147, 148.

142 *Gen. litt.* XII.26.54: ... *quantum eam capere mens humana potest, secundum assumptis Dei gratiam, ...*

intellect, the contemplation of the Ideas and the epistemological ascent. We will not pause here to demonstrate these similarities in both thinkers because these aspects will be examined extensively in 'The Image-Intellect' in Chapter 7. Moreover, in that chapter, those aspects corresponding to Plotinus' doctrine of intellect in Augustine's *Gen. litt.* will be supplemented and reinforced with similar notions which he expounded in *Trin.*, which will be treated in Chapter 5. In *Trin.*, Augustine expands his epistemology considerably and again utilizes many Plotinian elements in various ways. For example, his fusion of the element knowledge with the element love in his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* reveals an even deeper familiarity with Plotinus' epistemology and also with his notion of Ἐρως. In *Trin.*, Augustine expands his doctrine of 'the image of God' to 'the image of the Trinity', borrowing additional aspects of Plotinus' theory of knowledge as well as his conception of the triune Godhead. With the help of Plotinian psychology, Augustine also sharpens his views on the ascent and the soul's union with God, underscoring the soul's relationship with the *Verbum Dei* as well as with the three equal divine Persons in the Holy Trinity. In these doctrinal expositions, Augustine's explicit (and implicit) critique of Plotinus' philosophy is detectable.

An interesting textual correspondence between Augustine and Plotinus can be demonstrated here which has to do with the experience of intellectual vision and ecstasy. Augustine commenced *Gen. litt.* XII with a declaration of his intention to interpret what 'paradise' meant in a particular verse of Paul (2 Cor. 12:2–4) (XII.1.1–2). Here the apostle claimed to have known someone who had been 'snatched up to the third heaven ... or Paradise'. Augustine then proceeded to give a complete exegesis of these verses, out of which he devised his theory of three visions. In this context, he discussed ecstasy (XII.2.4, 12.26), the experience of being carried out of the body by a strong vision (XII.4.13) and rapture:

Next however, just as he has been rapt away (*raptus*) from the sense of the body to find himself among these bodily likenesses which are seen in the spirit, so too he may be rapt away (*rapiatur*) from these to be carried up to that region, so to say, of things intellectual or intelligible. There, without any bodily likenesses the pure transparent truth is perceived, ...

Gen. litt. XII.26.54

Plotinus mentioned ecstasy only once in the *Enneads* (VI.9.11.27), in an experience of contemplation in which he described imagining entering a sanctuary to meditate, leaving the statues of the gods behind and experiencing another kind of vision. Here the contemplator becomes one with Intellect and perceives himself as an image of that divine entity. The ascent continues further in which

Plotinus describes the experience of letting go and being carried out of oneself, in quiet ecstasy of union with the One.

... For this reason, this vision is hard to put into words (*Enn.* VI.9.10.19) ... Since, then, they were not two, but the seer himself was one with the seen, (for it was not really seen, but was united to him) (LZ: the human intellect with Νοῦς), if he remembers who he became when he was united with that, he will have an image of that in himself (VI.9.11.4–8) ... when he had made the ascent—but there was not even any reason or thought and he himself was not there. If we must even say this; but he was as if carried away or possessed by a god, in quiet solitude and a state of calm, not turning away anywhere in his being and not busy about himself, altogether at rest and having become a kind of rest. He had no thoughts of beauties, but had already run up beyond beauty and gone beyond the choir of virtues, like a man who enters into the sanctuary and leaves behind the statues in the outer shrine; these become again the first things he looks at when he comes out of the sanctuary, after his contemplation within and intercourse there, not with a statue or image but with the Divine itself; they are secondary objects of contemplation. But that other (LZ: united with the One), perhaps, was not a contemplation but another kind of seeing, a being out of oneself (ἔκστασις) and simplifying and giving oneself over and pressing towards contact and rest and a sustained thought leading to adaptation, if one is going to contemplate what is in the sanctuary. But if one looks in another way, one finds nothing. These are images (μιμήματα, LZ: imitations) and this, therefore, is how the wise among the expositors of holy things express in riddles how that god is seen; and a wise priest who understands the riddle may make the contemplation real by entering the sanctuary.

Enn. VI.9.11.11–29

Plotinus is describing visions here in three of the same ways as Augustine's theory of three visions: corporeal (the sight of the statues in the sanctuary), spiritual ('images ... this is how the wise ... express holy things in riddles') and intellectual: as in (among others) 'the wise priest who understands the riddle.' Plotinus' conception of the ascent goes further than that of Augustine's in *Gen. litt.*: from reason and thought the soul crosses over to the beyond—to the One, an incomprehensible, ecstatic experience. This theological view constitutes one of the main differences between the two thinkers: the Godhead in Plotinus' philosophy is ordered hierarchically, and in Augustine's, the three divine Persons are completely equal. However, it can be argued that there are corre-

spondences between Augustine's characterizations of the Holy Trinity and that of Plotinus' One, as we will see in Chapter 6.2.4.

Of interest to note here, is that Porphyry is often claimed to be Augustine's source for his theory of three visions, likely on account of Augustine's mentioning of Porphyry and the three visions (corporeal, spiritual and intellectual) in i.e., *Civ. Dei* x.9 and 32.¹⁴³ Additionally, 'spiritual vision' is that which demons deliver to those who wish to have an experience of God in the practice of theurgy. From the quote above, it is evident that the three visions also occur in the *Enneads*. Hence, it is equally likely that Plotinus had been Augustine's source.

¹⁴³ Treated in Chapter 2.2.2. Many researchers have recognized Augustine's indebtedness to Porphyry for his notion of *spiritus*: such as E. Gilson, P. Agaësse, J. Pépin, M. Dulaey, A. Solignac, etc. References in Madec, 'Savoir et voir', 236. See also S. Toulouse, 'Influences néoplatoniciennes sur l'analyse augustinienne des *visiones*', in: I. Bochet (ed.) *Archives de Philosophie. Recherche et Documentation* Tome 72–72 (2009), 225–248.

The Image of the Trinity in *De Trinitate*

1 Introduction to *De Trinitate*

1.1 Chapter Overview

This important chapter will delineate Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* as the *imago Trinitatis* in *Trin.*¹ His exegesis of Gen. 1: 26–27 in this work is the most elaborate of his entire oeuvre. This chapter will strive to do justice to it by accommodating its length and textual richness. We cannot delve into *Trin.* or his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* without a thorough preliminary introduction, consideration of its context and Augustine's literary motives.

For this reason, this chapter will commence with the topic of how Augustine evolved his treatment of the image of God in *Gen. litt* to that in *Trin.* Following this are introductory remarks on his method, the structure of *Trin.* as well as on the readership of this work. From there we will proceed with brief summaries of the whole content of the work. The first are of Augustine's characterization of the Trinitarian Godhead and his Christology in section 2. This material is derived mainly, but not exclusively, from books I–VII. His portrayal of the intellect as trinity starts from approximately book VII.12 with a brief exegesis of Gen. 1:26 and continues to the end of the work. This is documented in section 3 which is divided into three parts: Augustine's general treatment of the *imago Trinitatis*, his epistemology and the element love. The fourth section of this chapter deals with Augustine's account of the ascent of the soul in two contexts: epistemologically and through the experience of love, mirroring the same treatment of Plotinus in Chapter 3.

Because this study is focused on Augustine's involvement with Plotinus, the summary of the *imago Trinitatis* will be mostly directed to his philosophical inquiries. However this does not make the theology in his doctrine any less important. This study will likely not give his elaborations on Christian dogma (such as his doctrine on faith or sin) the adequate attention they deserve. Yet because they are indispensable for properly understanding Augustine's doc-

1 CCSL 50: books I–XII and 50A; books XIII–XV; Translations: *The Trinity De Trinitate*, Introduction, E. Hill O.P.; *Augustine on The Trinity Books 8–15*, G. Matthews (ed.) Translation: S. McKenna (Cambridge, 2002); BA 15: Dieu et son Œuvre *La Trinité* (Livres I–VI) Translation: M. Mellet, O.P. and Th. Camelot; Introduction: E. Hendrikx (Paris, 1955); BA 16: Dieu et son Œuvre *La Trinité* (Livres VII–XV) Translation: P. Aëgesse (Paris, 1955).

trine of the *imago Trinitatis*, they are mentioned in the treatment here. Augustine's treatment of love and knowledge, in the third and fourth sections of this chapter, will be given closer attention.

1.2 *The Treatment of Imago Dei in De Trinitate Compared to De genesi ad litteram*

Augustine's treatment of the *imago Dei* in *Gen. litt.* represented an important formative phase of the doctrine, having derived from his mature doctrine of creation. As such, all the elements of the *imago Dei* doctrine treated in Chapter 4 are present in some form or the other in *Trin.* One of the most important themes in *Trin.* from *Gen. litt.* is the immaterial *imago Dei*, the highest part of the soul, the intellect, whose main occupation is turning (*conversio*) to Light and Wisdom, the *Verbum Dei*, and being continuously renewed (*renovatio-reformatio-recreatio*) through contact with God and knowledge of God.² In *Trin.*, he elevates in particular the theme of the renewal of the spirit. His characterization of the intellect in his delineation of *visio intellectualis* from *Gen. litt.* XII is of utmost importance to keep in mind in *Trin.*, as this equally applies to the *imago Trinitatis*. He does not explain the characteristics of the intellect again in *Trin.*, he simply assumes the reader's recognition of such.³ The contemplation of eternal principles and the ultimate divine vision are likewise major themes in this work.

However, a number of differences or changes can be noted in *Trin.*, not so much in respect to content but to accentuation and approach. Augustine allows himself the liberty to meticulously explain how the *imago Dei* is truly an *imago Trinitatis*, that is, by showing that trinities exist in the intellect which reflect the Holy Trinity (and in doing so, adhering to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity which found consensus in the fourth century councils). To do this, he requires a clear definition of the Holy Trinity to serve as criteria of that which the intellect images. In *Trin.*, he maps out the human mind in as many facets as

² *Trin.* VIII.3.4–5, VII.6.12, etc.

³ A few examples of the three visions from *Gen. litt.* in *Trin.*: VIII.2.3: 'O soul weighed down with the body that decays (Wis. 9:15) and burdened with many and variable earthly thoughts, come and see it if you can—God's truth. For it is written that God is Light (1 John 1:5) not such as these eyes see, but as the mind sees when it hears "He is truth". Do not ask what truth is; immediately a fog of bodily images and a cloud of fancies will get in your way and disturb the bright fair weather that burst on you the first instant when I said "truth". Come, hold it in that first moment in which so to speak you caught a flash from the corner of your eye when the word "truth" was spoken, ...'; *Trin.* XV.7.13: '... but things past and future are all present with things present; and things are not thought about one for one, with thought moving from one to another, but all things grasped in one glance or view; how, I say, can any man comprehend this wisdom ...'.

possible (more extensively than in *Conf. x*), analyzing which of these aspects or combination of aspects best reflect the relationship of the three Trinitarian Persons. Compared to *Gen. litt.*, his method in *Trin.* is in some ways more lucid and straightforward. In *Gen. litt.* he was dealing with different inquiries simultaneously and constantly re-questioning his own conclusions about the human soul. Often he found it necessary to re-evaluate and temporarily refute his own position. His conclusion was often drawn much further up at the end of another book. In *Trin.*, he at least makes the effort to hold his general line of thought in focus, by summarizing and reminding the reader of his ambitions. Many inquiries which he vocalizes in the earlier books of *Trin.* are given a full answer in broader perspective in the final books XIV and XV.

On the other hand, his attempts at clarification do not necessarily make *Trin.* easier reading. It is of great advantage to the modern reader to familiarize oneself beforehand with Augustine's method and approach to his exploration into the human soul in *Trin.*,—which is why such an exposé is provided below. His ruminations on the reflection of the Holy Trinity in the human trinitarian image are largely drawn out and at times shroud his main inquiries.⁴ These explorations, especially in books VIII–X, are often deemed as a kind of *exercitatio mentis*.⁵ These rigorous mental exercises⁶ do not become easier in the course

4 E.g., '... of all Augustine's works, the *De Trinitate* appears to us to be the most moorless, an intractable mass of speculation floating oddly aloof from foundation in any particular social context.' J. Cavadini, 'The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De Trinitate*', *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992) 103–123.

5 Ayres defines Augustine's usage of *exercitatio mentis* in *Trin.* as such: '... a training in modes of thinking increasingly interior, and increasingly free from images, a gradual intellectual movement from the material to the immaterial, fundamentally Neo-Platonic in character.' 'The Christological Context', 114; M. Claes supplements Ayer's definition in characterizing Augustine's early philosophical works as follows: '*Exercitatio mentis* is a training in thought. A gradual intellectual movement from the material to the immaterial, from the exterior to the interior, from temporal to pedagogic strategy to convince the reader of *philosophia christiana*. Augustine's use of the *exercitatio mentis* has a rhetorical character.' Although Claes' definition is based upon Augustine's earliest works, his definition in my view is well suited for *Trin.* See M. Claes, '*Exercitatio mentis* and its Function in Mystagogy: Opening up the Individual for Exercises in Communal Thinking and Living', in: P.J.J. van Geest (ed.) *Seeing Through the Eyes of Faith, New Approaches to the Mystagogy of Church Fathers* (Leuven, 2016) 533–546; *ibidem*, '*Exercitatio Mentis*: een onderzoek naar Augustinus als pedagoog' (Dissertation, Tilburg University, 2011) 237; See also J. Cavadini, 'Structure, Intention', 104–105; Ayres, 'Augustine triune life of God'; B. Studer, *Augustinus de Trinitate, Eine Einführung* (Munich, 2005) 141, note 193.

There is not a consensus as to whether the term *e.m.* should be applied to Augustine's *Trin.* Studer does apply it. (e.g., 78) and refers to Schmaus' work on *Trin.* (M. Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitätslehre des heiligen Augustinus*, 1967). Hendriks also refers to *exercitatio animi* (BA 15, 612–613).

6 One example of many in *Trin.* where Augustine mentions exercising the reader's mind: 'But

of the reading and stand in distinct contrast to the depictions of the ascent of the human mind to divine Light, for example, in *Confessions*, where Augustine sweeps the reader up into his personal experiences with relative ease. Researchers in the past, represented by H.I. Marrou, deemed the books containing the most intense exercises as having little doctrinal value. The attitude today has changed. These books are still regarded as exercises but the content is taken more seriously.⁷ These passages of *Trin.* also seem to be intended for self-contemplation in order to draw the reader into the intense complexity of that part of the mind which reflects the Trinitarian divine mind and/or Christ.⁸ This is particularly true for his treatment self-love, self-knowledge and *verbum* in books IX–X. In these books, Augustine is analyzing the intramental triads in search of the best image of God possible. The tediousness of these books demand a deceleration of one's reading speed, yet once one has reached Book XI and then again, XIV, his exploration of the relationship between the *imago Trinitatis* and the *Trinitas qui est Deus* becomes fluent again, rewarding the reader with an optimistic, call it even triumphant tone (for example in *Trin.* XIV.14.20). From this, we can certainly conclude that upon completing *Gen. litt.*, Augustine apparently did not feel the satisfaction that the last word was said about the *imago Dei*.

Augustine's writing of *Trin.* overlapped his composition of *Gen. litt.*, the latter of which was composed between the years 401⁹ and 416.¹⁰ Hombert's chronology shows that the passages containing his interpretation of the *imago Dei* (*Gen. litt.* III.20.30–31 and throughout XII, including his theory of three visions)

as far as concerns that supreme, inexpressible, incorporeal and unchangeable nature and the perception of it in some measure or other by the understanding, there is nothing on which the human mind could better practice its gaze ...' (xv.27.49). See also xv.11: 'In pursuance of our plan to train the reader ...' (All English translations from *Trin.* are Hill's unless otherwise specified.)

- 7 Brachtendorf criticizes Marrou for his claim that the frequent incoherency of the composition of *Trin.* is due to Augustine's dominating interest in *exercitatio animi* (which lack scriptural context). Brachtendorf rebukes those researchers, who out of inability to explain these books of *Trin.*, pin the label *exercitatio* on to them, as if these passages have no dogmatic value (*Struktur*, 299–327); H.I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris, 1958) 299–327.
- 8 Ayres summarizes Augustine's standpoint on *e.m.* in *Trin.* IV and XIII: '... fallen humanity needs to undergo a certain exercitation and such an exercitation is provided by the Incarnation.' ('Christological Context', 117.)
- 9 Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches*, 137–188. Hombert's edition dates of *Gen. litt.*: books I–IIIb: 404–405; IIIb–XII: 412–414.
- 10 Hill, *On Genesis*, 164: 'Thus the composition of this great commentary on Genesis occupied more than about 15 years. There is a disagreement as to whether he began the work in 399 or 401 or 404. It was published in 416.'

were presumably worked on in 412–414. These dates correspond to the suggested dates of Augustine's writing of his books III–IV of *Trin.* (in 412–415). The passages in which Augustine begins to intensely treat the *imago Dei* in *Trin.* occur in book VII, which he continues to elaborate, according to Hombert, from 416 onward. What this chronology confirms is that after the composition of *Gen. litt.*, Augustine progressively continued to expand his doctrine of the *imago Dei* in *Trin.* In sum, between the years 412–427 Augustine was developing his exegesis of Gen. 1:26 to its utmost and fullest.

1.3 *Method and Structure of De Trinitate*

One of Augustine's aims in this work is to demonstrate to critics of the Nicæan creed that the divinity and co-equality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are rooted in Scripture.¹¹ He also attempts to treat all the questions which he deems important for understanding Catholic faith. Some themes appear at times to be of an explorative nature, because he does not necessarily find all the answers to his inquiries (*Trin.* xv.25.45). Yet the questions provide a departure point for pouring through the Scriptures for possible solutions.¹² The explorative character of *Trin.*, according to van Geest, can also lead us to regard *Trin.* as a product of Augustine's personal search or a form of self-enrichment, similar in many ways to his exposition on the Holy Trinity throughout *Conf.* XI–XIII. Seen in this way, *Conf.* could be considered as 'blueprint' for *Trin.*¹³ Many scholars point to a clear underlying system in *Trin.*¹⁴ Many as well (such as Ayres, Williams, Brachtendorf, etc.) insist on the unified character of this work.¹⁵

The basic structure of his treatment in *Trin.* tells us something about Augustine's method. The content can be divided roughly in three parts: the Holy Trinity, the *imago Dei-Trinitatis*, then a synthesis: in books I–VII, Augustine deals with the Holy Trinity in order to argue it as the sole God and causal ori-

11 Clark, *Trinitate*, 91; See also S. MacCormack, 'Augustine on Scripture and the Trinity', in: Mark Vessey (ed.) *A Companion to Augustine* (Chichester, 2012) 398–415.

12 Studer, *Trinitate*, 91–92 in reference to *Trin.* I.2.4.31.

13 P.J.J. van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God: Augustine as a Negative Theologian* (Leuven, 2010) 145–146; Rist, *Ancient Thought Baptized*, 145, note 129.

14 See Hill's table illustrating the symmetrical structure of *Trin.*: *Trinity*, 263–265; F. Van Fleteren, 'Ascent of the Soul', *AttA*, 63–67; 66.

15 As opposed to considering *Trin.* a work divided into two parts: the first on the Trinity, the second on the image of the Trinity. Marrou alleged that books I–VIII contained theological information concerning Catholic Trinitarian dogma underpinned with Scripture in order to refute heretics and that book IX deviated from this program with its philosophical (i.e., unscriptural) approach, striving to grasp what was treated earlier on the basis of faith (Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 315–327). Other researchers (such as Sullivan and Hill) have endorsed Marrou's stance (Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 120).

gin of the world. He explicates here the Son of God as Word of God, his earthly mission as Jesus Christ, as well as the worldly mission of the Holy Spirit. Then in book VII, the subject matter 'descends' to the creation of man, the human image as reflection of the Holy Trinity. His exegesis of Gen. 1:26 commences in VII.12 with the topic of the rational soul, the intellect. He then pulls the reader through a profound analysis of the mind, in search of the best mental trinity which qualifies as an image of the Trinity, which continues up to around book XIII.¹⁶ Throughout his exploration of the image of God, he includes important designations of God, (such as in book VIII) as Love and Good, who serves as an object of contemplation. Here we see Augustine sharpening his positive theology. Basically, books VIII–X are geared to studying the intellect with its glimpse 'inwards and upwards' through the less conscious regions of the human mind, searching for the limits in the *mens*, and gradually, in books XI–XIII, distinguishing gradations of the rational soul. As we recall, Augustine designated the *imago Dei* in *Gen. litt* as the rational soul and as the *mens*. In *Trin.*, he distinguishes which region of the *mens* pertains to the image of God.

Because the rational soul is constantly confronted with outer circumstances and sense data, Augustine makes another temporary 'descent' in book XI, in order to clarify 'the outer man' and determine the trinities involved in sense perception of material images.¹⁷ Gradually his explanation shifts to how human consciousness elevates itself from these images in worldly knowledge *scientia* to divine wisdom *sapientia* (books XII and XIII). *Scientia* also comprises in one sense knowledge of the self (*cogito* or *ratio*) as it is bound to the body. Yet it remains to be explained for Augustine how this knowledge can ultimately lead to *sapientia* of the *Verbum Dei*, which is the knowledge assimilated by the *imago Trinitatis*. His further distinctions of the rational soul in these books consist of its highest immaterial part, the *ratio superior*, where one makes contact with God; the lower part, the *ratio inferior*, the consciousness in which we function in our daily lives. He points out that only the *ratio superior* and *sapientia* pertain to the image of God. Thus, books XI and onwards disclose a drawn out epistemological ascent. We could say that the subject of the ascent is what this work is all about, as this theme comes to a head in books XIV–XV.¹⁸ Here he binds the results of his analysis together, as to how the human mind is related

16 R. Williams describes books IX–XIV as 'an enormous digression' (*'Sapientia'*, 323) which Brachtendorf refutes (*Struktur*, 120–121).

17 This raises questions as to the logical succession of the books in the whole work. See Sullivan, *Image of God*, 110–note 33.

18 F. van Fleteren, 'Mysticism in the *Confessiones*', 318–319.

to the Holy Trinity and evaluates the potentials within the ascent to God. He culminates *Trin.* with a prayer to God as Trinity.

1.4 Readership

Who did Augustine have in mind while writing *Trin.*? Some scholars believe that his readers would have been Christians with considerable knowledge of Platonism. M. Wisse suggests that they might even be Platonists themselves or 'borderline Christians'.¹⁹ Others, such as Cavadini and Ayres, characterize *Trin.* as a 'Neo-Platonist polemic' or an 'anti-Porphyrrian polemic'.²⁰ While the speculations are numerous and interesting to mention here, the inquiries of this study are not geared to deliver a response to this question. It can however question the validity of the claims of readership above concerning Platonism, based upon the results of this investigation.

The question arises as to whether these authors, while pinning a label on the intention of *Trin.* as a kind of Platonist polemic, have sufficiently taken into consideration the large amount of philosophical material Augustine borrowed from Plotinus which would characterize the church father himself as Platonist? To give an example, let us recall Augustine's critique of the Platonist practice of theurgy in *Civ. Dei* and in book IV of *Trin.* (Chapter 2.2.2). His accusations concerning these rituals in *Civ. Dei* were aimed at Porphyry and in *Trin.* at the 'arrogant philosophers'. As we saw in Chapter 2, Augustine rightly did not include Plotinus in his condemnation of theurgical practices, because he apparently recognized that Plotinus opposed them as well. The same researchers accounted for above who label *Trin.* as an anti-Platonist work, do not balk at the claim of the indebtedness of Plotinus or Porphyry for certain parts of Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine. Yet they fail to provide an explanation for why Augustine would devote a whole book to a Platonist polemic while at the same time, embracing a large amount of what he deemed as the acceptable part of Platonism. Deeper consideration of Augustine's relation to Platonism is called for, which this study will indeed provide. Required as well is a clearer differentiation of his relationship to individual Platonists. For, as we also saw in *Civ. Dei*, his judgment of certain philosophers varied. This point will be evaluated in the conclusions of this study (Chapter 10.4).

19 M. Wisse, *Participation*, Chapter 1 Theology; Cavadini, 'Structure, Intention', 105; Ayres, 'Christological Context', 95–121, 117–121.

20 E. Booth: 'The whole *De Trinitate* is a critique on Platonism.' 'St. Augustine's "notitia sui" related to Aristotle, the early Neo-Platonists and Hegel', *Augustiniana* 27, 1977, 70–132, 364–401; Kany, 'Typen und Tendenzen', 13–28.

2 The Trinitarian Godhead and Christology

2.1 *Augustine's Criteria for His Analysis of the Imago Trinitatis*

Augustine's doctrine of the *Sancta Trinitas* has not only been the subject of discussion since its composition, but as Williams stated, in the last two decades, the interest in re-interpretation of *Trin.* has resurged.²¹ The inquiries of this study however, with their focus on the *imago Trinitatis*, demand only a general overview of Augustine's Trinitarian theology and only as far as it relates to Augustine's anthropology. Yet on the other hand, like the doctrine of the human image, the divinity which the human soul images, is by no means a simple matter. Thus in order to do justification to the doctrine of the human image, the subject of the Holy Trinity requires a particular documentation, as the former serves as criteria for the latter. For this reason, the summaries here of Augustine's view on the individual Persons in the triune Godhead are not intended to be comprehensive. They are geared to facilitate the comparisons between Augustine and Plotinus in Chapters 6–9.

2.2 *The Son and His Incarnation*

In the first half of *Trin.*, Augustine's goal is to demonstrate the divinity and the co-equality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, utilizing citations from Scripture.²² In *Trin.* 1, he explains the divine nature of the Son which was sustained in his fully human physical incarnation. However, regarded within the framework of Augustine's Platonist ontology, and the tenet of the Godhead as being completely immaterial and invisible, this assertion would not seem logical or acceptable—especially to some critics of the Nicene creed.²³ For this reason, Augustine sets out to confront the difficulty of this theology and to adequately explicate how the Incarnation fits into his scheme of the Holy Trinity as immaterial and transcendent, as well as how or why the Son's divine essence remained immutable throughout his human life.

He initially approaches this problem by regarding the appearances of God told of in the Old Testament which occurred historically before the Incarnation of Christ (*Trin.* 11.18.35). He emphasizes that none of these appearances were manifestations in their true substance. It was only the divine Son, the Word, who appeared as Jesus Christ. Just as the other apparitions of God in the Old Testament (as well as the appearances of the Holy Spirit), the physical body of

21 Williams, 'Introduction', vii–viii.

22 Clark, *Trinitate*, 91.

23 Porphyry attacked the Christians on this point in the third century which Augustine responded to in *Civ. Dei* x.29.

the Word of God was not an appearance in his true being because the being of Christ, even in his physical suffering on the crucifix, his death and resurrection, was not earthly (111.2.7). *Trin.* 11 explores the question as to how the Son as such can equal the Father, not only in light of the semantic discrepancy implied in the Father-Son relationship, but also in light of the fact that both the Son and the Holy Spirit have worldly missions. Because Scripture never mentions the sending of the Father, Augustine asserts therefore that the Father is the 'God of no other' (1V.20.28). He argues as well that the invisible, earthly mission of the Holy Spirit likewise does not threaten Trinitarian equality because its divine nature also always remains intact (11.9.15.99). The Son's Incarnation was however superior to all other divine missions (1V.21.30–32) and is unique in that it was the only mission in the form of a human being in flesh and blood. Augustine declares the incarnational mission of the Son as the extension of the eternal procession from the Father. As such, Augustine's exposé on the Incarnation emphasizes Christ's role as Mediator and at the same time, anchors Christ into the entire salvation history.

2.3 *The Holy Spirit*²⁴

Augustine posits that the Holy Spirit was sent from the Father AND the Son and is thus the spirit of both (1V.20.29).²⁵ His intention now is to explicate the origin of the Holy Spirit. Here he applies the adage 'God is Love' (1John 4:8) to primarily the Holy Spirit (1V.17.27 and VX.19.33), designating the Holy Spirit as God's love.²⁶ Augustine explains that human love is a gift from God which has its precedent in the outflowing of love from both the Father and the Son, proceeding from them eternally (xv.26.45). Their gift of love permits humans to bind to each other and to God. He identifies the problem of distinguishing the generation (or the birth *natus*)²⁷ of the Son from the Father and the generation of the Holy Spirit from the procession of the Father and the Son (as

24 In *Trin.* IV–VI (and especially in the latter half of *Trin.* xv), Augustine integrates his thoughts from previous works on the Holy Spirit: e.g., from *De fide et de symbolo*, *Sermones*, *Epistulae* and *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXXIV*. Especially in *De fide et symbolo*, his doctrine is most developed. *Trin.* differs from these earlier works, in that it elaborates on the Holy Trinity by means of an exploration of the human mind; the departure point of which is the *imago Dei* (Gen. 1:26) (Studer, *Trinitate*, 88–91).

25 This was Augustine's position in the 4th–5th century debate of *filioque*.

26 Augustine was the first church father to associate the Holy Spirit with love (Studer, *Trinitate*, 94). The adage 'God is love' has other implications in Augustine's doctrine which will also be treated further in the subsections 2.6: 'God is Love and Good' and 2.7: 'The Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity is Love'.

27 Augustine apparently uses the terms 'birth' and 'generation' synonymously in *Trin.*

datus) (v.13.14–15.14.15) and admits the difficulty in comprehending this.²⁸ His solution is the designation of the Holy Spirit as the binding force between the Father and Son which establishes unity in the divine Trinity.

2.4 *Trinitarian Ontology: God's Equality in Essence, Substance*

How does Augustine account for all these apparent changes occurring within the triune Godhead and still maintain his (Platonist) ontological claim that God is immaterial, transcendent, immutable and eternal as in his doctrine of creation?²⁹ First he asserts that the relations between the divine Persons only became manifest at the creation act. The Father and Son produced the Spirit in the realm of eternity (and eternally); the Holy Spirit flowed out from their love; yet the Spirit was only perceived as a 'gift' once the world and human beings came to existence. Seen in this way, no change ever occurred in God's existence or in the Trinitarian procession (vi.5.7).

In books v and vii, Augustine recognizes that there are serious translation difficulties regarding the divine Persons in association with divine Being from the Greek (ὑπόστασις, οὐσία) to Latin *substantia* or *essentia*. His considerations of the Latin translation fill many pages of *Trin.*, yet for our purposes here, only a general summary will suffice.³⁰ He argues that we must conceive of God as a

28 As he often does throughout *Trin.*, he stresses the necessity of faith in order to understand (i.e., vii.6.12, viii.8.12, ix.1.1, etc.) and explains the role of faith in obtaining wisdom (*Trin.* xii–xiii). See Studer, *Trinitate*, 93–94.

29 This question could be applied as well to Plotinus' account of the diverse movements in his theogony, such as turning ἐπιστροφή of the divine Intellect as well as the Λόγος as creative ἐνέργεια while the Plotinian Hypostases maintain their eternal, unchangeable character.

30 See e.g., *Trin.* v.1 and v.3.4. For the summary of this topic: Williams, 'Trinitate', 847.

It is generally assumed that Augustine is borrowing from Aristotle's doctrine of categories. There is much literature on Augustine's application of Aristotelian categories, such as Studer, *Trinitate*, 136–138; Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 133–136; van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 147–149, 173; Lagouanère believes Augustine's source is Porphyry (*Interiorité*, 364). Augustine tells of his reading of Aristotle's 'Categories' at age 20 in *Conf.* iv.16.28. It is more likely that he was referring to Porphyry's well known commentary on this than to the work of Aristotle himself.

Yet others suggest as Augustine's source Plotinus' lengthy treatment of substance and being, in which he explicitly engages with Aristotle (*Enn.* vi.1, 2 and 3). Concerning Augustine's substantiation of personal attributes, O'Daly considers *Enn.* vi.1.6, in which the one-many concept of Intellect is treated and described as a single essence that nonetheless contains plural relations. O'Daly concludes that this 'could well have served as a fruitful model of the Trinitarian essence and its internal relations in Augustine.' ('Augustine's Use of the Category of Relation in *De Trinitate* v and vii', in: Bermon, *Le De Trinitate de saint Augustin*, 137–144.) Evidently this issue requires more study. See also: Ayres, *Trinity*, 295; A.C. Lloyd, 'On Augustine's Concept of a Person', in: R.A. Markus (ed.) *Augustine: A Collec-*

pure self-sustaining reality, requiring no qualities or accidentals which would be mutable, transient or incidental to his Being. Everything said of God is *secundum substantiam* (v.3.4); in that sense, Love and Wisdom are substances as well. We can indeed speak of God in the category of relation (v.4.6), as in the relationship of the three divine Persons and also as *caritas*, the mutual love between Father and Son which is the Holy Spirit. All three Persons comprise substantial reality. Augustine argues that it is not possible that the Godhead encompasses more than three divine persons. When there are two loving subjects, there exists love between them which is the third entity; this is the essential logic of divine life.³¹ Therefore the Holy Trinity is made up of three metaphysical, intelligible entities who are not only equal in divinity, their unity is formed on the same ontological level and together they constitute one *essentia* (VII.1.1 and VII.3.6).³² Augustine's choice for translating the Greek terms three ὑποστάσεις and one οὐσία as *substantia* and *essentia*, according to van Geest, is related to his view on how humans can know God. Augustine continuously confirms that the *essentia* of God cannot be grasped. On the other hand, the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ as *formae substantiae* are intelligible. These are Forms through which the Being of God can be approached. The second eternal Person is less imaginable than the visual Son.³³

To briefly summarize: Augustine's study of the mission of each of the individual Persons in the Trinity in books I–VII strives to prove that neither the Son or the Holy Spirit is inferior to the Father. Within the procession of the Trinity, they all remain perfectly equal. Further, he underscores that the divine Persons are not personified divine qualities. Because of the simplicity of the divine Being, they all share the same qualities. The divine attributes, such as Wisdom, Goodness and Love, are substances as well and as such are not adjuncts to the divine essence. Although the Son is often referred to as Wisdom, especially in his role in revelation, the Son is no more or less wiser than the Father (VII.1.1–VII.3.6). Augustine is not entirely satisfied with the terminology of substances and *personae* (VII.4.7). Nonetheless, this formulation is sufficient to serve as criteria

tion of Critical Essays (New York, 1972) 191–205, 201; Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 16–20, 23–24 and Lagouanère (*Intériorité*, 364).

31 Williams, 'Trinitate', 848; See also Clark, 'Trinitate', 91–102.

32 See also xv.3.4 and xiv.19.26.

33 Van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 167; e.g., *Trin.* ix.11.16 and v.10.11. Additionally, van Geest asserts that Augustine continuously attempts to clarify that pondering the Holy Trinity contributes to the increasing awareness of how human speech and thought infinitely differs from that of God (*Trin.* v.1.1). This is also stated by Plotinus (most evident in his depiction of the One) as well as by Paul, who says, we see God in a mirror and in enigmas (1 Cor. 13:12), a quote used often by Augustine in *Trin.* (*ibidem*, 156).

for determining three elements of the human mind which show resemblance to the divine Trinity. We will see how these criteria are put into operation at the end of section 3.

2.5 *The Son (Word), Christ, as Perfect Image of God the Father*

Although Augustine's introduction to the subject 'image', as in the human image of God begins at VII.3.5 of *Trin.*, an aspect of utmost relevance to his exposition on the *imago Trinitatis* occurs in book IV, interwoven in the lengthy discussions on the relation of the Father to the Son.³⁴ Augustine explicates here how the human image of God correlates to the Perfect Image of God, the second divine Person, the Son. This was the *Verbum Dei*, the Creator who manifested as Christ—a subject which he expounded in *Gen. litt.*³⁵ The difference with his treatment in *Gen. litt.* is that there, the Incarnation was mentioned only in passing in the context of the *Verbum Dei*. Now in *Trin.* IV, he gives a more formal, thorough explanation of how the eternal Word of God could have retained his divine nature in his physical human Incarnation. In doing so, he reminds us firstly that it was also Christ-the-Word who directly created human souls (IV.1.3), and secondly, of his role in the purification and renewal of humans, which we recall, were important aspects in his exposition of *imago Dei* in *Gen. litt.* He clarifies further that Christ's Incarnation, his death and resurrection provide an example for humans to imitate (*Trin.* IV.3.5–6). Further in VI.10.11–12, he takes up this subject again, demonstrating his accordance with the thesis of Hilary, that the Son being equal to the Father, is a Perfect Image of the Father.

As regards the image (LZ: the Son of God), I suppose that he (LZ: Hilary) mentioned "form" on account of the beauty involved in such harmony, in that primordial equality and primordial likeness, where there is no discord and no inequality and no kind of unlikeness, but identical correspondence with that of which it is the image (LZ: the Father); where there is supreme and primordial life, such that it is not one thing to live and another to be, but being and living are the same; and where there is supreme and primordial understanding (*primus ac summus intellectus*)

34 This fact is mentioned here in order to underline the lack of validity in regarding *Trin.* as treating two separate themes: his theology of the Holy Trinity and the anthropology of the human image, treated respectively in I–VII and VII–XV. I agree with the researchers who claim the unified character of *Trin.* Both 'separate themes' are treated interdependently and have relevance in all books of the work.

35 See Chapter 4.2.2. Augustine also dealt with Christ as the Perfect Image of the Father in *Div. qu.* 51 and *Gen. litt.* I.4.9, following typical Greek theology (Clark, 'Trinitate', 92).

such that it is not one thing to understand (*intellegere*) and another to live, but understanding is identical with living, identical with all things, being as it were one perfect Word to which nothing is lacking, which is like the art of the almighty and wise God, full of all the living and unchanging ideas, which are all one in it, as it is one from the one with whom it is one.

Trin. VI.10.11

In this paragraph there are several important aspects being expressed which relate to his doctrine on how the human image relates to the perfect One: 1. a foreshadowing of the trinities reflected in the human image illustrated with the trinity of the elements of Life, Being and Understanding, which he will develop in the coming books; 2. his application to the second divine Person the triad of Being, Life and Understanding (Thought). As such Christ is identified here with knowledge, understanding and intelligence, essentially no differently than in *Gen. litt.*, where Augustine expressed that He, as Creation and Form Principle, was the source of illumination and divine knowledge for the human intellect-image of God. Augustine's mentioning here of the divine Ideas in the Word is also significant in this context, in Christ's role of bringing the human intellect to contemplation of the Ideas. This exact combination is also found in Plotinus' second Hypostasis, *Noûs*, which Augustine, not coincidentally, mentioned in *Civ. Dei* x.28 in his positive appraisal of Platonism.³⁶ Plotinus' Intellect is the demiurge; its intelligible world, the Ideas, are the archetypes for all things in the world and encompass the Intellect's Life, Being, Thought. (See Chapter 6.2.2.) Additionally, similar to Augustine's statements here, the *Noûs* is a *Λόγος* (Latin: *Verbum*), a Word of the One, from whom he received all his properties. What Augustine then proceeds to show is also very interesting for his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* as well: first he states that God is omniscient and his knowledge of all things is eternal. Then:

... that inexpressible embrace, so to say, of the Father and the Image (LZ = the Son) is not without enjoyment, without charity, without happiness. So this love, delight, felicity or blessedness (if any human word can be found that is good enough to express it) he (LZ: Hilary) calls very briefly 'use' and it is the Holy Spirit in the triad, (LZ: trinity) not begotten, but the sweetness of begetter and begotten pervading all creatures according to their capacity with its vast generosity and fruitfulness, that they might all keep their right order and rest in their right places. 12. Thus all these

36 Treated in Chapter 2.3.2 and Chapter 3.2.2.2, e.g.: *Enn.* V.1.4.25–30.

things around us that the divine art has made, reveal in themselves a certain unity and form and order. Any one of them you like is both some one thing, like the various kinds of bodies and temperaments of souls; and it is fashioned in some form, like the shapes and qualities of bodies and the sciences or skills of the soul; and it seeks or maintains some kind of order, like the weights or proper places of bodies and the loves and pleasure of souls ...

Trin. VI.10.11–12

In mentioning the knowledge of God as something eternal, he turns to the eternal love between the Father and the Image, which manifests in the Holy Spirit. He then explains that the divine Trinity pervades all creatures (these contain ‘trinities’ as well: the human mind especially), various kinds of bodies and temperaments of the souls. As such, the ‘Trinity of Love’ exists in all things—it encompasses the unity of form and order. With these words, he is laying the foundation of his extensive treatment in books VIII–X: of the relationship of love within the Holy Trinity as a paradigm for the human *imago Trinitatis* and its own love and knowledge. Further on in *Trin.*, Augustine will explain how this subtle and differentiated picture of the Godhead relates to imaging in the human intellect. This will include explaining the role of Christ in bringing the intellect to see in itself these designations of the Holy Trinity.³⁷

This is a good moment to briefly recollect the main points which have been dealt with in this subsection which will be of importance to his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, especially in the contexts of epistemology (section 3) and the ascent (4). The human image of God is not only an image of the Perfect Image, the Son, the Creator and the Word of God, but also of his Incarnation (VII.3.5). The Perfect Image in the latter manifestation serves as model for mankind, for example, for the resurrection in the afterlife when human images will become equal to Christ’s Incarnation.³⁸ All of creation was made by the entire Trinity. Thus, it follows that the human image of God is also an image of the Trinity of which the Perfect Image is only a part.³⁹

For the sake of the completeness of this synthesis, a few other important aspects of Augustine’s Trinitarian doctrine are noteworthy. First of all, it is not only the Holy Trinity in Augustine’s thinking who bears a triune structure, but also Christ the second Person, as stated in the quote above (VI.10.11–12).

37 XIV.14.20, XV.11.20, etc.

38 IV.3.6, XV.11.20–21.

39 VII.6.12, XV.20.39; See XII.6.7 in which Augustine expresses his critique of an interpretation of Gen. 1:26 as man being solely created by the Father in the image of the Son.

Secondly, as we have already seen, Augustine posits that the Holy Trinity in its totality is completely immaterial, non-created and infinite (VI.10.12). These statements do not however appear reconcilable with the Incarnation. Thus he justifies this in closing book VII: 'There must be neither confusion or mixing up of the persons, nor such distinction of them as may imply any disparity. If this cannot be grasped by understanding, let it be held by faith, until he shines in our minds who said through the prophet, "Unless you believe you will not understand". (Is. 7:9)' (VII.6.12). Hence, in regard to the three divine entities—and two with different missions—being perfectly equal,—as well as to how an entity can bring forth another entity (or other entities) which are perfectly equal to the conceiver—, he stresses that these notions are not able to be grasped with a materially oriented mind. The physical senses are unable to perceive immaterial, unchangeable and eternal reality and therefore are unable to directly grasp ultimate truths (VIII.1.2). Even the immaterial consciousness of the image of God-intellect cannot fully grasp the reality of the divine Trinity, as the Trinity is ineffable and beyond the mind's comprehension (XV.23.44 and 24). The importance Augustine attaches to having faith in order to understand something which is essentially incomprehensible will be discussed again in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

2.6 *God is Love and Good*

Another important aspect of the Godhead for this study is Augustine's designation of God as Love,⁴⁰ which is expressed in, for instance, 1John 4:8. Augustine initiates this topic in *Trin.* VIII.3.4 by stating: 'You certainly only love what is good,' because what one loves can be nothing other than what one deems to be good. We judge things to be good, he says, or that one thing is better than the other, and believe our judgment to be true, because we are already familiar with an existing notion or standard of what good is. From this notion we evaluate things and approve or prefer one thing over another. This standard of Good pertains to the divine Idea of Good. God is pure Good. 'This is how we should love God, not this or that good but Good itself, and we should seek the good of the soul, not the good it can hover over in judgment but the good it can cleave to in love and what is this but God?' (VIII.3.4)

Loving God therefore begins with loving what is good. But what is the Good and how does a human being become good? His response: by turning (*conversio*) to God because God is Good. Hence Augustine is exploring here the conception of God in the sense of how we can 'see' or understand God: as Good-

40 See *Conf.* x.6.8 'What do I love when I love you? ...'

ness itself, the Form 'Good' (VIII.3.6). These points correspond to his doctrine of *imago Dei* in *Gen. litt.*, that all Forms exist in the *Verbum Dei*, the eternal Son: 'In the form of God, all things were made by him ... (Jn. 1:3)' (I.11.22). Seeing God is only possible in the *imago Dei*—the *mens*—the highest part of the mind where the Ideas can be contemplated. That one can love God by loving love itself, which is associated with the Holy Spirit, is an important element in his Trinitarian doctrine.

2.7 *The Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity is Love*

In XV.17.28, Augustine returns to the verses 'God is Love' and 'God is Spirit' (1 John 4–6) from *Trin.* VIII–IX. He sets out to re-affirm the existence of the Holy Spirit, because, he maintains, the Scriptures themselves do not provide an adequate clarification. In doing so, he proposes the following analogy: in the same way that Christ in the Holy Trinity is identified with Wisdom and Truth, the Holy Spirit is associated with Love. Yet one must keep in mind that all Trinitarian persons are equal and the whole Trinity is Love and Wisdom.⁴¹ He reiterates the origin of divine Love as the Holy Spirit which is a result of the generation of Love between God the Father and the Son, as exemplified in the salient quote below.

Nothing is more excellent than this gift of God. This alone is what distinguishes between the sons of the eternal kingdom and the sons of eternal perdition. Other endowments too are given through the Spirit, but without charity they are of no use. Unless therefore the Holy Spirit is imparted to someone to make him a lover of God and neighbor, he cannot transfer from the left hand to the right. Why is the Spirit distinctively called gift? ... if a man has this love or charity (*dilectio sive caritas*) (they are two names for one thing) it brings him home to the kingdom; yes, even faith is only rendered of any use for this purpose of charity. Faith there can indeed be without charity, but it cannot be of any use. ... So the love which is from God and is God, is distinctively the Holy Spirit, through him the charity of God is poured out into our hearts and through it the whole triad (LZ: *memoria-intellegentia-amor*—which is the best representation of the *imago Dei*) dwells in us. This is the reason why it is most appro-

41 *Trin.* XV.17.31: 'Just then as we distinctly call the Word of God by the name of wisdom, although the Holy Spirit and the Father are also wisdom in a general sense, so the Spirit is distinctly called by the term charity although both the Father the Son are charity in a general sense.'

priate that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the gift of God. And this gift surely, is distinctively to be understood as being the charity which brings us to God, without which no other gift of God at all can bring us through to God.

xv.18.32; also xv.19.37

In this passage, Augustine explains the mission of the Holy Spirit as pouring love into human hearts which enables us to love our neighbor and others.⁴² God's Love in the Holy Spirit is emphatically that which will bring us to God (or to God's Love). This is of such importance, he says, that not even something essential as strong faith,—which he stated earlier is essential for all understanding and which is also essential in order to be able to love God—, will do anyone any good if there is no love involved in it (quoting 1 Cor. 13:1–3).

Certain correspondences from the *Enneads* can be detected in Augustine's description of the Holy Spirit. The love and desire of the divine Intellect for its source, the One, is a paradigm for human love which desires the love beyond oneself. The One in Plotinus is the source of all love and beauty. Augustine designates God as the origin of all beauty as well (*Trin.* xv.2.3). The designation of the Holy Spirit as Love will be of importance to Augustine's delineation of the *imago Trinitatis* as composed of the triad mind-knowledge-love and how the human image can image the divine Trinity. This was especially indicated above: 'So the love which is from God and is God, is distinctly the Holy Spirit; through Him the charity of God is poured into our hearts and through it the whole triad dwells in us.' (xv.18.32)

2.8 *God is Intelligible and Incomprehensible*

Augustine demonstrates in *Trin.* viii–ix how God is intelligible to the human mind. He can be conceived in contemplating the Ideas—the Forms or eternal principles—which exist in His mind, such as the perfect Good or Justice which are within the stretches of the human intellect (viii). Additionally, he describes that which is called 'Life in God' as Being and Understanding. This 'Understanding' is God's Wisdom which characterizes the second Trinitarian Person (xv.5.7). Further on, Augustine will show in his anthropology that a certain degree of our knowledge of God comes through our own acquired knowledge of

42 Reinforced by this powerful passage: 'So it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him and he himself is love. Man has no capacity to love God except from God. That is why he (Lz: John = 1 John 4:8–19) says a little later: Let us love because he first loved us ...' (xv.17.31).

the human mind, which is imprinted there (*ibidem*). Knowledge of God and his Wisdom can be obtained through reading of Christ's life in the Scriptures. God is intelligible through our reason faculty or through our intuition, or as in a mirror. But in this life we are only capable of seeing God as through dark glass and enigmas.⁴³ Yet he also states that God's Wisdom is ultimately incomprehensible for humans (XV.7.13).⁴⁴ The Holy Trinity in its singularity and magnitude is likewise ultimately unimaginable for the human mind accustomed to the multiplicity of itself and of the world. 'So something can be loved which is unknown, provided it is believed.' (*Trin.* VIII.4.6). The Holy Trinity, which is beyond temporal and especially discursive thinking, is hence ineffable.⁴⁵

So then, to direct our gaze to the Creator by understanding the things that are made (Rom 1:20), we should understand him as a triad whose traces⁴⁶ appear in creation in a way that is fitting. In that supreme triad is the source of all things, and the most perfect beauty and wholly blissful delight. Those three seem both to be bounded or determined by each other, and yet in themselves to be unbounded and infinite ...

VI.10.12

43 XV.20.39; 1Cor. 13:12: '12. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.' Translation: [https://www.biblegateway.com/.2015./](https://www.biblegateway.com/.2015/) Van Fleteren comments: 'Augustine concludes that only knowledge *per speculum et in aenigmate* is allotted to humans below. The Pauline "mirror" refers to burnished metal upon which an image is reflected ... images ... not distinct and clear. To Augustine the rhetor, an *aenigma* is a figure of speech, a likeness *similitudo* ... but a distant one'. 'The Ascent to God', 66.

44 'Then how can this wisdom by which God knows all things, in such a way that what is called the future, is not being waited for to happen as though it were not there yet, but things past and future are all present with things present; and things are not thought about one for one, with thought moving from one to another, but all things grasped in one glance or view; how, I say, can any man comprehend this wisdom, which is simultaneously prudence, simultaneously knowledge, seeing that we cannot even comprehend our own? ... from myself indeed I understand how wonderful and incomprehensible is your knowledge with which you have made me, seeing that I am not even able to comprehend myself whom you have made; and yet a fire burns up in my meditation (Ps. 29:3), causing me to seek your face always (Ps. 105:4).' (*Trin.* XV.7.13) (Translation: McKenna).

45 E.g., XV.14.24; XV.27.49–50; van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 145–174: 'Augustine seems to continuously intertwine the affirmative with the apophatic in speaking of God, so that he ultimately attains a salvific uncertainty rather than attaining a certain knowledge which could lead to conceit' [My translation of the Dutch: *Stellig maar onzeker, Augustinus' benadering van God* (Budel, 2007, 2008) 176.]

46 Hill translates the Latin term *vestigium* as 'trace', Sullivan as 'vestiges' (Sullivan, *Image of God*, 87–88). For more on Augustine's definition of 'image', see Chapter 4.2.7.

Here Augustine is relaying the perception of supreme beauty and wholly blissful delight in a divine vision, gazing at the Creator, the Holy Trinity, which is unbounded and infinite. Admittedly, the passage above is one of the few times he expresses the infinite character of the divine Trinity in *Trin.* These statements echo without doubt Plotinus' remarks on the One, as a monistic principle and the origin of beauty and love, which is indescribable yet experienced in bliss and ecstasy.⁴⁷ As already mentioned, Augustine confirms that the *essentia* of God cannot be grasped; on the other hand, the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, *formae substantiae*—the substance of God which includes the Forms—, are indeed intelligible.⁴⁸

In affirming the ultimate incomprehensibility of the Holy Trinity, Augustine is ironically continuously supplying the reader of *Trin.* with more intelligible knowledge of God. In addition to the assertions above, he includes that our minds can conceive of the notion of unity but not the Trinity itself. Augustine also distinguishes between our present knowledge of God as Holy Trinity and the knowledge acquired as a *visio Dei* in the afterlife. Due to the unfathomable character of God, he stresses the importance of faith to lead the mind to the eventual understanding of truth;⁴⁹ we must first believe that God or the Trinity is the highest Good and that God is the Trinity of Love in order to experience this as such. Further he acknowledges the difficulty of seeing the Holy Trinity in oneself as the image of God (xv.50).⁵⁰ What can the mind then perceive of the Holy Trinity? The Holy Trinity is beyond our intellectual grasp ... just as we are to ourselves (xv.7.12–13). Augustine compensates for this claim by advancing his view of obtaining knowledge of God beyond our present knowledge through the activities of love, desire and longing for God.⁵¹ Here, he exploits the biblical motif of 'searching and finding' and the activity of prayer which will continuously bring us closer to God.⁵² These are aspects directly related to his notion of love and knowledge in his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* and then, the ascent.

The last point to highlight in this synthesis is Augustine's claim that if God is unchanging, self-maintaining, eternal Goodness, Wisdom and the source of

47 See Chapters 3.4.7; 6.2.4 and 9.4. The One in Plotinus is however beyond Being; Augustine's Trinity as a whole constitutes divine Being.

48 Van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 147–148, 155–160, 166; M. Wisse's departure point is Augustine's view on God as entailing exclusively incomprehensibility, *Participation*, 11–12.

49 *Trin.* vii.4.7; xv.6.10.

50 At times, rather emphatically: 'Come see if you can ... stay there if you can. But you cannot.' viii.2.3. Augustine repeats in xv.27.50 that he himself was not capable.

51 xv.17.31–18.32.

52 viii.1.1, xv.1–2.

all, then such a reality cannot be described as divine unless this *entire* reality is divine. Divinity consists of an equal unity; no hierarchic levels of godliness exist in his doctrine as in Neo-Platonist philosophy. Augustine's assertions here entail a paradox: each divine Person must be irreducibly fully God and yet each must be inseparably the one God with the other two. Thus in saying there are three Persons, there are not three Gods involved.⁵³ *Trin.* VII and onwards will be devoted to the challenge of this explication. Chapter twelve of *Trin.* VII represents in a certain way a turning point in his exposition on the Holy Trinity. Here he addresses *Gen. 1:26–27*, the verses expressing that man was created to the image of God.

3 The *Imago Trinitatis*: Knowledge and Love

3.1 Introduction

In *Gen. litt.* Augustine highlighted the importance of obtaining divine knowledge in his doctrine of the image of God. The theme of love hardly came into the picture. Yet in *Trin.*, Augustine attributes great importance to this aspect. His notion of *amor* is not only fused into his conception of will (*voluntas*) but most importantly, with the elements of knowledge (*notitia*) and truth (*verbum*) (*Trin.* VIII–X). Thus, compared to his treatment in *Gen. litt.*, Augustine's doctrine of love brings a new perspective to his doctrine of the *imago Dei* and raises a crop of new questions. For instance, concerning the love relationship between the human image and the Holy Trinity, how this relationship can develop in this life, as well as to what extent love can unify the human image and the Holy Trinity which it images. Section 3 on the *imago Trinitatis* will be divided into three main parts: first, a general exposition on Augustine's treatment of the *imago Trinitatis*; then it will deal with the two specific aspects of his doctrine in question here, namely, his epistemology—the element knowledge and the element love. A few words of introduction concerning the treatment in this chapter are necessary before proceeding further.

In the preceding Chapters 3 (on Plotinus) and 4 (on Augustine and his doctrine of creation), the doctrines of the image of God were treated in their respective cosmologies and laid out in a fairly uncomplicated manner. Yet Augustine's doctrine of the image of God in his work *Trin.* presents some knotty organizational difficulties. First of all, there is no cosmology in *Trin.* Yet the same aspects of imaging dealt with in *Gen. litt.* XII return in *Trin.*: firstly, the

53 Ayres, 'Triune life', 74–75.

imaging taking place within the human mind itself and secondly, the imaging of the divine. In *Trin.*, compared to his treatment in *Gen. litt.*, Augustine is especially preoccupied with the question of *how* the image of God reflects the divine. Hence Augustine expands his notion of imaging in *Trin.* in a number of different ways. The differences between his treatments of the image of God in *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.* was touched upon earlier in this chapter, but now we must confront other factors which bear direct consequences for the treatment in this section.

The two main aspects of the image of God which interest us here, the elements of knowledge and love, as noted above, are fused together in books VIII–X. In the exposition on Plotinus' epistemology and ascent, we saw that these elements were not woven together so tightly in *The Enneads*, which, as such, would not make a separate documentation of them difficult. Yet this is indeed the case with Augustine. Thus this study demands an artificial separation of the two elements in order to facilitate the comparison with Plotinus' notions of knowledge and love in Chapters 6–9. This means, of course, that in the separate subsections on knowledge and love, certain redundancies are unavoidable. This is especially apparent in the treatment of the true knowledge (*verbum*) which intricately involves both elements.

Another difficulty presents itself here as well—whether it is handy to follow Augustine's own order of treatment in *Trin.* in dealing with the elements knowledge and love. Augustine's order of treatment does not always make a great deal of sense. In books VIII–X, he searches for the trinities in the mind—the rational soul—which best represent the image of the Holy Trinity. Then at the inception of book XI, he makes a puzzling turn: he explains the distinction between the inner and outer man in certain verses of Paul's letters⁵⁴ and announces his intention to discuss the outer man, who is predominantly involved with sense perception. This represents, as it were, a 'step down' from the general context of the triads in the higher mind in books VIII–X. He then proceeds to explore various trinities in the outer man and in doing so, returns to the subject of material images, which he treated in *Gen. litt.* in corporeal and spiritual visions.⁵⁵ Here he takes the opportunity to expound his theory of vestiges or signs within the framework of his study of intramental, material triads. This exposition is of interest to this study, because his notion of vestiges and the perception of vestiges in the outer world display a direct correspondence to Plotinus' doctrine of images and imaging,—not only evident in the philosopher's cosmology, but

54 Col. 3:10 and 2 Cor. 4:16.

55 In *Trin.* VIII.6.9 and IX.6.10, the term *verba* was also translated as 'words' or 'thoughts'.

also in his epistemology. Augustine's underlying motive in books XI–XII is to finally complete the task of further differentiating what exactly pertains to the image of God in the triadic elements he discussed in books VIII–X. His conclusion in *Trin.* XI is that the triads he depicted in the outer man involving material images cannot pertain to the image of God. This should not come as a surprise when we recall Augustine's theory of three visions in *Gen. litt.* XII, because there he depicted intellectual vision, which was inherent to the image of God, as an illuminated spirit purified of these material images.

Augustine's discussion of intramental images in book XI is essential for the comprehension of his further treatment in *Trin.* XII–XIII, where crucial aspects of his epistemology come to fore. There he distinguishes two areas in the rational soul, employing a new terminology: *ratio inferior* and *superior*, and two kinds of knowledge: *scientia* and *sapientia*. Compared to *Gen. litt.*, these are novelties: here we note a steady line of development of his doctrine of the image of God from *Gen. litt.* to *Trin.* Yet of utmost importance here is that by differentiating two areas of the rational soul and two kinds of knowledge, he is linking his epistemology even closer to that of Plotinus. In order to accommodate these complications, the first part of section 3 will provide a broad overview of Augustine's doctrine of the image of God in *Trin.* This will predominantly revolve around his analysis of the trinities in the human mind. It will explain Augustine's intentions and the context which will aid the understanding of his analysis of the human trinities to be examined later in this chapter.

Initially, his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* will be treated in the order of presentation in *Trin.* This will start with book VII, where *Gen.* 1:26–27 is mentioned in the context of the human image of God. A prelude to the triads in the *imago Trinitatis* in book VIII—where we can search for the Holy Trinity—will be given and then a summary of Augustine's analysis of the triads themselves. Halfway through this exposition, the scope will broaden to certain extensions of the triadic elements (such as *verbum*, memory, etc.), which will also be relevant in upcoming sections. Additional general facets of the mental trinities will also be taken into account, such as the object of the trinities and how Augustine fuses self-love with self-knowledge in books IX–X. The final subsection consists of an essay explicating the two terms, knowledge and love, in view of modern definitions, such as 'consciousness' which are employed in this study to circumscribe and interpret what this researcher believes Augustine intended for us to understand.

3.2 *Augustine's General Treatment of the Imago Trinitatis*

3.2.1 The Image of God in *De Trinitate* VII

The first mentioning of the image of God in *Trin.* is VII.3.5, in the context of the discussion of wisdom.⁵⁶

For we too are the image of God, though not the equal one like him; we are made by the Father through the Son, not born of the Father like that image, we are image because we are illuminated with light; that one is so because it is the light which illuminates, and therefore it provides a model for us without having a model itself But we, by pressing on, imitate him, who abides motionless; we follow him who stands still, and by walking in him we move toward him, because for us he became a road or way in time by his humility, while being for us an eternal abode by his divinity.

VII.3.5

By beginning his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* with these words, Augustine takes up where he left off in *Gen. litt.* He is associating the human image of God with its model, the Son of God, Christ, the Perfect Image, who is the source of our illumination and formation. In assimilating divine Wisdom through his Light, humans realize their relationship to the Creator, as his image. As in *Conf.*, he stresses here that humility plays a major role in the imitation of the life of Christ and in ascending to his eternal existence as the Son of God, Word of God equal to the Father. Augustine is also engaged here in a discussion of the relational reality between the Father and the Son—the Image of the Father, and in the midst of this, he returns to themes mentioned in *Gen. litt.* (III.19.29) concerning the image of God. For instance, that God is sometimes mentioned in Scripture in the plural (*Trin.* VII.6.12) such as in Gen. 1:26: ‘Let us make man to our image and likeness.’ The words ‘Let us’ and ‘our’ are indicators of such a relationship, for it was not ‘God’ in the sense of one divine entity as Creator, but three divine Persons in unity; thus it was the three Persons who made man according to their image. Just as in his doctrine of the *imago Dei* in *Gen. litt.*, he refers here readily and repeatedly to statements of St. Paul. For example: ‘man as the image and glory of God’ (1 Cor. 11:7); ‘Be refashioned in the newness

⁵⁶ Augustine inquires why Wisdom in Scripture is almost always attributed to the Son. He suggests that it is because it is the Son who reveals the Father to us, and because human wisdom is to imitate the Incarnate Son (because we are images of Him), just as the Eternal Word imitates the Father, as image of the Father (VII.2.3–4.7). He thereafter concludes that Wisdom is a substance and not a relational attribute. See Hill’s summary of VII.2 (*Trinity*, 225).

of your mind' (Rom. 1:22); 'Be therefore imitators of God' (Eph. 5:1); and also in reference to the new man: 'who is being renewed for the recognition (LZ: knowledge) of God according to the image of him who created Him.' (Col. 3:10). Then Augustine reveals his conclusion,—not unlike his conclusions in *Gen. litt* and *Conf.*—that the human image of God bears an unequal resemblance to the Holy Trinity. '... man is said to be "to the image" ... to show that man is the image of the Trinity; not equal to the Trinity as the Son is equal to the Father, but approaching it, as has been said, by a certain likeness ... a sort of imitation.' (VII.6.12).

These statements serve as departure points for his doctrinal expansion from *imago Dei* to *imago Trinitatis*. Indeed, a certain closeness exists in the relationship between man and the Holy Trinity, he repeats, yet as we will soon see, there seems to be for Augustine a conceptually greater distance between the human image and *Trinitas* than the image to simply *Deus*. Bridging this gap to God, as he stated in *Gen. litt*, was effectuated by renewing the image upon assimilating divine knowledge. Now his explanation of how the image reflects the Holy Trinity must postulate the triune character of the human image-intellect.

3.3 *A Prelude to the Study of Triads in the Imago Trinitatis (De Trinitate VII–VIII)*

In the prologue of book VIII, Augustine prays to God to open the readers' minds for understanding his next topic: the relational reality of the Trinity:

All this has been said ... we must ... beseech God as devoutly and earnestly as we can to open our understanding and temper our fondness for controversy, so that our minds may be able to perceive the essence or being of truth without any mass, without any changeableness. Now therefore, as far as the wonderfully merciful Creator may assist us, let us turn our attention to the things we are going to discuss in a more inward manner than the things that have been discussed above, though in fact, they are the same things; but let us all the while still keep to the rule that just because a thing is not yet clear to our understanding we must not therefore dismiss it from the firm assent of our faith.

VIII.1.2

Augustine announces that he now intends to discuss essentially the same subjects from the previous books on the Godhead which were difficult to fathom. These were: how can three entities—and two with different missions—be perfectly equal? And how can an entity bring forth another entity (or entities) which are perfectly equal to the conceiver? He reminds again that this cannot

be grasped with a materially oriented mind: physical senses cannot perceive what is immaterial, unchangeable and eternal; they simply cannot grasp ultimate truth (VIII.1.2). Yet the present lack of understanding should not discourage us. Instead one must search further: to proceed ‘in a more inward manner’.⁵⁷ There is only one place to find it: in the highest part of the mind—which was designated as the immaterial image of God or rational soul in *Gen. litt.* Although the human mind cannot be compared to the greatness and truth of the Holy Trinity, Augustine invites the reader to try to see God:

Come see if you can, O “soul weighed down with the body that decays” (Wis. 9:15) and burdened with many and variable earthly thoughts, come and see it if you can—God’s truth. For it is written that God is Light (John 1:1–5) not such as these eyes see, but as the mind sees when it hears ‘He is truth’. Do not ask what truth is; immediately a fog of bodily images and a cloud of fancies will get in your way and disturb the bright fair weather that burst on you the first instant when I said “truth”. Come, hold it in that first moment in which so to speak you caught a flash from the corner of your eye when the word “truth” was spoken, stay there if you can. But you cannot, you slide back into these familiar and earthly things. And what weight is it, I ask, that drags you back but the birdlime of greed for the dirty junk you have picked up on your wayward wanderings?

VIII.2.3

These are familiar statements which were referred to in *Conf.* or *Gen. litt.*, pointing to the frustrating incapability to remain in concentration of God’s Light during intellectual vision. It seems as if he is depicting a failure here. Yet ironically, his discussion then leads to how God is intelligible for humans, on which he elaborates in the rest of the book. The general subject is divine love: ‘see-

57 Augustine’s method here of the human mind turning inward to find the Holy Trinity, or using the passage in *Gen.* 1.26–27 about the image of God in order to explain the Holy Trinity has not always been received with appreciation by theologians. See Schumacher, ‘Theo-logic’, note 49. Augustine’s approach in *Trin.* is different than his other treatments of the divine Trinity, such as *De fide et symbolo*. See also Colin Gunton, [‘The Promise of Trinitarian Theology’ (Edinburgh, 1997) 42–43] who asserts that Augustine’s approach ‘distances the Trinity from its ecclesiastical and soteriological context.’ (quoted by Matthew Drever, ‘Self Before God?’). Drever proposes a different but highly interesting interpretation: ‘But what if the directionality between the mind and God suggested by Gunton is actually the reverse in Augustine’s Trinitarian thought? What if the structure of the mind is most fundamentally made known through the Trinity? Moreover what if it is not the inner being of God that is at issue here, but the outer economy of grace?’ (235).

ing God', he says, is truly the same as loving God, which is no different than loving the Form (VIII.3.6). This includes an introduction to his first mental triads, which likewise revolve around love. From this point onwards, Augustine's arrangement of subject matter concerning knowledge and love becomes complex. For all practical purposes, the following section will give a résumé of Augustine's treatment of the intramental trinities in books VIII–X in *Trin.*

3.4 *Augustine's Analysis of the Human Mental Trinities (De Trinitate IX–X; XII–XV)*

The analysis of the human mind is motivated by an inquiry: if God is to be understood as a Trinity, and the human mind is an image of the Trinity, what are the trinities which can be found in the human mind?⁵⁸ Throughout *Trin.*, Augustine will prove that there are in fact countless trinities in the human mind.⁵⁹ His inquiry must therefore necessarily be refined to which mental trinities ultimately merit the designation of an 'image of God as Trinity' (IX.2.2). Augustine bases the characteristics of a true trinity in the human mind on the qualifications of the Trinity which were introduced in books I–VII. To recapitulate, these were, firstly: in the divine Holy Trinity, all three Persons were equal in essence. Secondly, within the Holy Trinity, the following relational constellation existed: the Father who generated the Son; deriving from the love between the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit was generated, as transcendent Love, the unifying factor between the first two. Subsequently, Augustine now searches for the same analogy⁶⁰ in the human mind. This is a tedious and exigent task.

Essentially the criteria which Augustine maintains while looking for the perfect, albeit the best image, dictate that there must be three substances in the human mind collaborating as a trio, approaching the same relational pattern of the Holy Trinity. This entails the primary condition of one aspect being brought forth from the other, while the third party, a product of the first two, binds these

58 Note in this and the upcoming triads the similarity with classical dialectic from the Greek philosophic model: thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Augustine himself wrote a treatise entitled *De Dialectica*. Brachtendorf treats this in the framework of the inner word (*Struktur*, 286–288).

59 Yet this does not imply that the human mind is infinite. Material images furnish a false self-image: *Trin.* XI.8, X.5.7–8.11, XV.7.3; *Conf.* X.17.26.

60 On Augustine's usage of analogy: see A. Schindler, *Wort und Analogie in Augustins Trinitätslehre* (Tübingen, 1965). Schindler discusses different possible sources for analogies for Augustine (43–60), suggesting *Enn.* IV.3.28.10–19 for *Trin.* XI.12 (on *memoria*). See Chapter 7.3 on source questions of Augustine's employment of triads; also Lagouanère, *Intériorité*, 448–506.

two together. Together the three elements must be of equal substantive value and ideally function in unity as one essence. In addition to these conditions, we must keep in mind another continuously emphasized aspect by Augustine: God is completely immaterial; hence an adequate trinity existing in the rational human soul must necessarily be completely immaterial as well. As explained in *Gen. litt.* XII, it is only the intellect which can be free from temporally oriented material images, physicality and worldliness.

In saying this, it is not the intention here to give a complete rendition of the finer points of Augustine's argumentations concerning how the particular aspects in the triads do or do not comply with these conditions.⁶¹ Nor of his judgments on whether or not the triads are candidates for meriting the designation 'perfect image of God.' For, in fact, the majority of trinities he analyzes do not meet the criteria. For example, if they are not completely immaterial or do not pertain to the 'inner man.'

Instead we will summarize briefly the most important points regarding the triads in his analysis. As in *Gen. litt.*, Augustine employs the term *mens* to signify the rational soul.⁶² In *Trin.* VII, Augustine establishes that the *mens*, in the higher consciousness of the *imago Dei*,⁶³ forms a triad with the two elements: knowledge *notitia* and love *amor*, collaborating in unity. This trinity is expressed as mind-knowledge-love (*mens-notitia-amor*), which forms the crux of his analysis, as well as the basis of certain successive trinities. In books X–XIII,⁶⁴ he will explain how the term *mens* encompasses the conception of *memoria*. Memory consists of thinking of, or recalling or remembering oneself as in self-reflection. Augustine combines this element as well with the elements of knowledge and love, to evolve the triad to self-understanding and self-loving (willing). Thus, the terminology of the triad *mens-notitia-amor* from *Trin.* IX will be replaced in book X to result in the triad of *memoria-intellegentia-amor/voluntas*: self-consciousness, self-understanding and self-love/willing. In this trinity, the elements *amor* and *voluntas* are equivalent.⁶⁵ The will here is synonymous with love; however he applies other aspects to *voluntas*, such

61 For more detail, see Sullivan, *Image of God*, chapters 3 and 4. Actually, all the trinities in inner man revolve essentially around a core conception: i) mind = *mens*, *memoria*; ii) knowledge = *notitia*-understanding-*verbum*; iii) love-will = *amor/voluntas*.

62 Besides *mens*, he also uses in *Trin.* the terms *anima* and *animus*: the *animus* is the rational soul. *Anima* refers to soul in a general sense. See J. Moingt, *BA* 16, Notes Complémentaires no. 9, 581–582.

63 See notes 71, 85–86 on the term 'consciousness'. Also in section 3: 'Excursus on Love and Knowledge ...'.

64 E.g., X.11.17, 12.19–X1.3.6, 8.13, 11.18, XII.15.24–25.

65 X.5.7, 11.17–18 and 12.19.

as the intention of one's gaze or attention, which is essential for acquiring knowledge (*Trin.* XI). This new terminology of the human trinity, Augustine will claim, best exemplifies the image of God. The two trinities, which will be the subject of upcoming discussions in this chapter, function as such: in the first place, the mind reflects upon itself,—in this sense, 'recalls oneself'. In doing so, the mind brings forth knowledge-self-knowledge (as in 'understanding oneself'). Knowledge is bound to the mind through the third element, love—as in loving oneself and loving (or approving of) one's knowledge of oneself.⁶⁶ In effect, this triad forms a close analogy to the Holy Trinitarian procession. As evident here, Augustine explicitly fuses the aspect of knowledge with the element of love.

While establishing the triads best suited for the image of God, Augustine expands his analysis to the 'self'. Self-knowledge was already introduced briefly in *Gen. litt.* VII.21.28 as the whole presence of the self to oneself.⁶⁷ In *Conf.* X, Augustine analyzed the inner recesses of the mind as well. But now in books VIII–X of *Trin.*, his approach to this topic attains a greater complexity while striving to study the relationship between the elements love and knowledge. This fusion not only has doctrinal significance, his descriptions of such confront the reader with her/his own mind and its operations on a higher, more abstract level. It is his analysis of the elements of the human mind in *Trin.* IX–X which is most appropriately deemed as spiritual exercises. In the context of self-knowledge and self-love in *Trin.* X,⁶⁸ Augustine proceeds to apply his views on human love, including longing, and to some extent 'will', to the context of human knowledge. He instructs that directing one's love and desires to physical or material things will distract or deter one from obtaining true self-knowledge. Attaching love to these things or images of them will create a false self-image (X.6.8, 8.11). It will also potentially lead to sin, as in when the will is absorbed with material things, it becomes like them and in doing so, turns its back on the better things.⁶⁹

Another important aspect introduced in book VIII is the notion *verbum*, inner truth or an unspoken thought. This can best be described analogously in its relation to the Holy Trinitarian procession, as in the Son of God, *Verbum Dei*, having been brought forth from God the Father. Applied to the human mind, the *mens* brings forth knowledge *notitia* and now more specifically, inner truth

66 The conscious act of 'willing' is involved here as well.

67 In *Gen. litt.*, he identifies self-knowledge with the term *anima* or 'soul'; but in *Trin.* with the term *mens* (Hill, *Trinity*, 337, note 21).

68 E.g., X.3.5, 10.15 and 11.16.

69 XI.5.8, XII.10.14–15.

verba. Augustine explains the notion *verbum* in both contexts of knowledge and love. In the context of knowledge, a *verbum* comes forth as self-knowledge, while the mind contemplates the eternal principles in the *Verbum Dei*. Accordingly, the element love or will in the human mind forms a parallel to the Holy Spirit, which binds together the first two Persons. In the human mind, *amor* binds together the first two elements, the mind to its knowledge. The element love also has to do with the inner appreciation, intuition, approbation or confirmation that a particular knowledge is true, conforming to what one knows in one's own mind to be true (VIII.6.9).

In books XII–XIII, Augustine expands his exploration of the element knowledge further, returning to his inquiry as to which knowledge pertains specifically to the image of God. In brief, he concludes that *memoria* shares with *mens* lower and higher levels of functioning. Because the lower operations of mind and memory involve intramental physical images, Augustine will see the need to demarcate the rational soul into lower and higher regions (*ratio inferior* and *superior*), which he expounds throughout book XII. Accordingly he differentiates two different types of self-knowledge, two different kinds of selves as well as two general kinds of knowledge: *scientia* and *sapientia*. Only the higher region of the *mens* merits the distinction of the location where God is imaged, the intellect, which is nourished only by *sapientia*, not *scientia*.

3.5 *The Imago Trinitatis: a Unity of Mind-Self-Knowledge and Self-Love (Books IX–X)*

From now on we will focus specifically on the two main triads mentioned above which Augustine deems as the trinities best representing the image of God: *mens-notitia-amor* and *memoria-intellegentia-amor/voluntas*. Our main interest here concerns Augustine's remarks on the three elements in the rational soul, *mens*, *notitia* and *amor*, which he describes as independent substances of an immaterial nature (IX.4.5).⁷⁰ The justification for the latter is that they require or possess no qualities in order to exist in themselves.⁷¹ 'For this knowl-

⁷⁰ This recalls Plotinus *Enn.* VI.7.41.9, who makes the same claim about substances regarding the triad of knowing (νοῦς-νόησις-νοητόν: *Enn.* V.3.5.44). Love is a substance as well as the higher soul itself (*Enn.* III.5.3).

⁷¹ See Gilson's comments on the triad *mens-notitia-amor* in *Trin.* IX.4.5 as substances. He objects to Schmaus' designation of the triads in the human mind as being an 'actual consciousness' (Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 130, note 32) and deems this trinity instead as a 'virtual image of the Trinity' (Gilson, *Introduction*, 1929, 286). I agree with Schmaus on this issue.

Whether mind, knowledge and love are all deemed as substances by Augustine, seems for some to be an unsettled matter. Brachtendorf comments here against Hölscher, who

edge is a kind of life in the reason of the knower ...' (XI.4.4). 'And what is love but a kind of life ...' (VIII.10.14). Functioning interdependently, the three elements form a unity in the human mind; they are what endow the mind its unity—as well as its sense of self.

Augustine points out that love and knowledge are different substances from mind in that they both have a relational character. They can only exist as long as there is an object external to itself: as long as there is something loved or something known.⁷² The mind itself however does not possess this trait. It, too, is a substance, existing in itself without a relational necessity in order to sustain its existence. In the context of Augustine's discussion of self-awareness in the triads, the mind is not brought forth by another element (XIV.10.13). The mind does however bring forth knowledge and love.⁷³ Additionally, the mind is always immediately present to itself (X.12.19);⁷⁴ it is always conscious of itself and of the fact that it exists. It is therefore by nature reflexive (X.5.7, 10.16).⁷⁵ As mentioned earlier, *mens* refers to the self-consciousness which Augustine finds more appropriately expressed in the term *memoria*, in 'recalling itself'.⁷⁶ The three elements remain substances of equal value, and as such,

maintains that Augustine applied a different definition of substance to the human mind, namely that the terms such as *amor* and *notitia* serve as qualities of the mind (or accidentals): (*Struktur*, 126–133 esp. 130-note 33). I do not find Holscher's arguments convincing.

- 72 Comparable to relational terms like 'friend' or 'father'. (See Hill's summary of books v-vii, 186–188: the Holy Trinity and these relational substances, God the Father and God the Son.) Brachtendorf: There are no accidentals involved here. This is an *ad se* predication (*Struktur*, 63–67).
- 73 (IX.3.18). N.J. Torchia points out some significant differences between Augustine's self-knowledge and self-love here: self-knowledge produces an offspring (*verbum*); self-love does not bring forth anything (*Restless Mind*, 178–179).
- 74 Recalls Plotinus' proposition that self-knowledge is one with oneself (unity) in the divine Intellect: *Enn.* v.8.11.33–35.
- 75 On the difference between 'knowing oneself' and 'thinking oneself', van Bavel provides an interesting observation: according to Augustine, the experience of knowing oneself differs from a purposeful knowing of another object. Self-consciousness is to be understood as singular. It does not consist of connecting a thinking subject with the object it is thinking about. The sought after object is immediately present to itself and one perceives it as a presence to itself. Thus Augustine makes a minimal distinction between thinking of oneself and knowing oneself. The first is a result of immediacy and self-presence of the mind. The latter, knowing, always includes active reflection and the aspect of an acquired possession [*Augustinus van Hippo Over de Drie-eenheid*, Introduction and Translation: T.J. van Bavel (Leuven, 2005) 26–27].
- 76 Van Bavel clarifies: 'The ultimate trinity which Augustine describes is memory, insight and will. Remembering is more than remembering the past, it is the ability to possess the known, even though this occurs in an unconscious manner. Remembering is the source

form one essence. This conception is parallel to the relationship of perfect unity of the three divine Persons which subsumes the differences of the separate missions of the second and third Persons.⁷⁷ Therefore in order for the three elements in the human trinity to be equal to each other (and in order for this triad to make sense), all three elements must have an object, in the first place, itself, as explained in the next point. Thus the unity of this triad depends upon the activity of the mind in producing knowledge of itself and loving itself.

When the mind becomes one with itself, it loves itself. In this case, love is equal to the mind. Self-knowledge (the product of mind) is dependent upon the mind as well as love (or its self-love) for its existence. The 'product of the mind' also constitutes a kind of truth: an inner *verbum*. The reproductive activities of the mind demonstrate the Trinitarian parent (*parens*)-offspring (*proles*) relationship which Augustine described as the Father giving birth to the Son. As such, knowledge is both word and image of the mind (IX.11.16), analogous to the Son *Verbum* being an exact expression and Image of the Father.

Brachtendorf offers a number of insightful comments on these passages in book IX. The intelligibility of the object of self-knowledge, as described above, signifies that the mind has access to itself not through the senses, but through itself. It knows itself directly through itself. *Ergo et se ipsam per se ipsam novit* (IX.3.3). This means that Augustine is refuting the notion that the self is known or derived from knowledge of other spirits (the latter of which is mediated through the physical senses). The main point of Augustine's thesis is that knowing, *notitia*, in itself, possesses a certain character of Being, which is intelligible. Due to this, knowledge, according to the order of being, has a certain affinity with its object. Augustine is demonstrating here that knowledge of something is of greater worth than the object itself. Knowledge of the body (which is an Idea-related reality) is higher than the (reality of) the body self. Augustine does not apply this to God however: because knowledge of God is not more valuable than God himself.⁷⁸

To tie in all the main points here, the elements mind, knowledge and love, are substantive and can exist independently without qualifiers. Knowledge

of our personality. Insight is the intuitive contemplation of our thoughts. Will is the connecting and unifying love. Three forces, one mind, different but existing in a necessary relationship to one another.' (*Drie-eenheid*, 25) (translation of the Dutch by LZ).

77 X.11.18, XV.17.28; Ayres, *Passionate Intellect*, 271: 'Our self-knowledge can only begin to serve as an analogy for the Trinity once we discover where we might "look" in ourselves to grow in knowledge and love of God.' See also *Trin.* IX.12.18.

78 See Plotinus *Enn.* V.3.1; (*Struktur*, 126–129, 143; 128).

manifests as subject (knower) and object (when something can be known and be loved in someone's mind). Augustine set out to prove that the mind always knows itself, has always known itself and will always know itself. Self-knowledge exists necessarily as long as the mind exists.⁷⁹ This self-relationship is also a characteristic of the divine Trinity.⁸⁰ The condition for knowing oneself, Augustine argues, is necessarily loving oneself. As such, self-awareness and the activities of thinking, knowing, understanding, loving and desiring all function in the human mind in a certain unity, corresponding in a vague manner to the Holy Trinity. To what extent one's self-image, self-knowledge and self-love can be true is another matter, which will be dealt in the upcoming sections.

3.6 *The Object of the Trinities: Self and God*

After examining many trinities of diverse compositions beginning with book VII, at the end of book X, Augustine finally arrives at the trinity which most adequately meets his criteria of being an image of God: the triad of memory-knowledge/intelligence-love/will.⁸¹ In the meantime, he establishes a crucial new condition: the object or focus of these trinities.⁸² The trinities are only dynamic and succeed in being an image of the Holy Trinity when focused on the self. (This is a temporary formulation.) The self as subject having an object of contemplation, itself, reflects the Holy Trinity which eternally remembers and contemplates itself (xv.17.28). Such a trinity may be theoretically called an *imago Trinitatis*, for in turning inward and gazing at oneself, the mind reflects the divine Trinity doing the same.

However Augustine warns that a trinity with itself as object is still a faulty one. If it remains in this state, it will never become perfected because it still

79 On how Augustine's *cogito* argument (*Trin.* x.10.14 and 16) influenced Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. See i.e., B. Stock, *Inner Dialogues, The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2010) 111–120; R. Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death* (Oxford, 2008); Cary, *Augustine's Invention Inner Self*. The notion of 'I think, therefore I am' is also present in Plotinus' conception of the divine Intellect: *Enn.* v.3.24–25.

80 xv.6.10; xv.7.12: 'So the Father knows all things in himself, knows them in the Son; but in himself as knowing himself, in the Son as knowing his Word which is about all these things that are in himself. Likewise the Son too knows all things in himself, and he knows them in the Father as the things from which are born all things that he as Son knows in himself ...' (Translation: McKenna).

81 x.10.16, 11.17–18, 12.19.

82 E.g., xi.5.8, 6.10; xii.4.4, xiv.2.4. For an extensive explanation of the objects of the trinities, see Sullivan, *Image of God*, 134–148.

encompasses the potential to fall into sin and doing evil, such as, longing for status, power, superiority and dominion over others.⁸³ Augustine asserts that self-love which is truly dynamic is only possible while loving God. Moreover, proper self-love entails loving one's neighbor equally as oneself. Being a good person and doing good things essentially means choosing to act for the common good of all, contrary to pursuing what is only beneficial for oneself. The latter, as well as the sins mentioned above, are the outcome of pride (original sin). For this reason we require Christ's grace—or the gift of love and grace from the Holy Spirit—to raise us up to the proper functioning of the human will, to be able to love beyond ourselves and love God. Hence a trinity with self as object is a primary condition for becoming a perfect image of God, yet alone, it is deficient.

The correct focus occurs when the human trinity of memory-knowledge-love/will is directed to God as object. The elements of the triad focused on *sui* subsequently transform to *Dei*.⁸⁴ Unified with God, the mind will form a more perfect unity with itself—, reflecting in some way—albeit imperfectly—the unification of *memoria-intellegentia-amor/voluntas* in the Holy Trinity which is an absolute, perfect equality (xv.17.28–29). At this stage, a person can truly know, understand and love itself. One finds fulfillment and joy in thinking of God: recalling previous thoughts or experiences of God, or recalling or reflecting upon one's knowledge, understanding and loving of God. In this way, this trinity produces true thoughts (*verba*) which approach the ultimate Word (*Verbum Dei*) of Wisdom and Truth (xv.15.24–26).

3.7 *Excursus on Love and Knowledge in Modern and Ancient Terminology*

A question which readily comes to mind in the discussion of love and knowledge in both Augustine and Plotinus is how something like love can be applied to something as technical as acquiring knowledge and the cognitive functions of the mind? This will be the subject of the following paragraph, discussed more or less in the form of an essay, which includes other similar considerations which come up frequently in this course of this study: the use of modern terms to denote (especially philosophical) terms in antiquity. Many researchers erroneously assume that terms such as 'intellect' or 'rational' in ancient texts have approximately the same meaning as our usage of them today. Other terms such

83 XII.8.13, 9.14, 10.15 and 11.16. These are evil acts instigated by the devil which can be defeated by God's Justice (xiii.13.17). For God is Justice (viii.7.10) and Love itself (viii.8.12).

84 E.g., xiv.2.4., 6, 8–9, xiv.12.15, 13.17, 14.18, 15.21, 19.25, etc.

as ‘consciousness’⁸⁵ and ‘self’⁸⁶ have a distinctly modern ring. To make the list of ambiguous terms complete, we could include the following as well: spiritual, science, wisdom, intuition, memory and even knowledge and love. This necessitates a brief clarification of ancient and modern terminology, which will be geared to avoiding general but also coarse misunderstandings.⁸⁷ This explanation will support the premise in this study that Augustine’s depiction of the

85 It is not uncommon to encounter terms such as ‘consciousness’ in translations of ancient texts or in secondary literature in order to aid the comprehension of ancient philosophical notions (without further explication of their broad meaning). For instance, this term was used freely throughout Chapter 111 on Plotinus. It is also used frequently in Armstrong’s translation of the *Enneads*. Plotinus discusses consciousness/awareness (αἰσθάνεσθαι / παρακολουθεῖν) in e.g., *Enn.* 1.4.9–10 (the Greek terms are taken from 1.4.9.15). Another example is E. Hill’s translation of *Trin.*, the term consciousness is used for *in animus* and *in animo* (in the soul) 1X.10.16 (Hill, *Trinitate*, 282–283) (while McKenna translates these as ‘the human mind’: *Trinity*, 37–38).

86 In my view, Augustine’s conception of ‘self’ corresponds to ‘consciousness of mind’, ‘ways of knowing’ or knowing oneself. There is limitless literature on the subject of Augustine’s conception of self in light of the modern view of self. R. Sorabji’s *Self* provides a good overview of this problematic especially in the context of Augustine’s notion of self-knowledge and awareness in *Trin.* X.10.14 and 16 (201–245). (Sorabji does not however treat this in the sense of intellection, which pertains to my interpretation here.); Drever, ‘Self Before God?’, 233–242. This note is an excerpt from my article: ‘Prayer, Desire and the Image of God: Augustine’s Longing for God in his “Prayer to the Holy Trinity”’, in: H. van Loon, et al. (eds.) *Prayer and the Transformation of the Self in Early Christian Mystagogy* (Leuven, 2018) 281–300, 288, note 21.

87 For an overview of contemporary philosophical discussions concerning the application of the modern conception of ‘consciousness’ to ancient concepts, see ‘Introduction’ in: S. Heinämaa, V. Lähtenmäki, P. Remes, (eds.) *Consciousness: From Perception to Reflection in the History of Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 2007) 1–10. The term ‘conscious’ is highly appropriate for the application to the doctrines of Augustine and Plotinus because it signifies awareness and a process of knowing through (various kinds of) perception. Additionally, because it indicates a purely mental faculty. Related specifically to Augustinian conceptions which are also mentioned in this chapter, the term consciousness can be used in the context of reflexive, cognitive (another modern term) activity or in being present to oneself (i.e., *se cogitare* and *se nosse* in *Trin.* X.10.14 and X.10.16). These terms can in turn be translated as self-awareness or self-knowledge.

‘Consciousness’ or ‘awareness’ in Augustine also have to do with the non-physical faculties of the soul in gathering knowledge and is thus related to Augustine’s epistemology: i.e., his investigations of the nature and limitations of human knowledge in *Trin.* IX–XIII. These in turn are directly related to Augustine’s doctrine of the soul and his exegesis of the image of God, designated as the highest part of the soul—the *intellectus*.

I refer to the intellect as a ‘kind of consciousness’ or ‘state of mind’, or even ‘higher consciousness’ as contrasted with the ordinary, awake state of mind and perception. ‘Intellect’ is a state of mind which requires progressive actualization. The proper philosophical term for this higher state of mind is ‘intellection’, pertaining to the activity of the intellect or to intellectual vision, the definition of which is given in this study. The term intellection

imago Dei/Trinitatis (as well as Plotinus' image/intellect) can be best understood as 'a kind of consciousness',⁸⁸ sharply distinguished from the ordinary, daily state of mind.

The issue at hand has little to do with Augustine's individual definitions which might have been highly original or created a legacy. It has more to do with our contemporary way of thinking, in which something like love is identified solely with the heart, and emotions, as having a separate existence from the more controllable ambitions of the 'head'. More specifically, love, from the perspective of modern psychology, is categorized as an emotion belonging to the irrational or intuitive 'right side brain functioning,' as distinguished from the cognitive and rational left side brain function, which deals with processing empirical knowledge.⁸⁹ This conception of love and emotion, radically reduced to the irrational, is not applicable to Plotinus' or Augustine's way of thinking.⁹⁰

indeed requires more explanation in order to not confuse this with general modern conceptions of 'intellect' which often connotes empirical perception or discursive thought. (This is an excerpt from my article 'Prayer', 285, note 17.)

Kany identifies various interpretation models in the scholarly literature of *Trin.* from the middle of the 19th century to today (e.g., that of C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*), many of which (such as the idealistic, Platonizing and noetic models) have characterized *Trin.* ix–x as 'eine Philosophie des Selbstbewusstseins'. Kany, 'Typen und Tendenzen', 13–28.

88 On April 15, 2015, Prof. R. Williams gave a lecture at St. Andrews University, UK on 'What is Consciousness?', debunking the contemporary reductionist position that 'consciousness is a kind of a machine'. His lecture confirms my view that my research necessitates a specification of general, modern connotations concerning knowledge and love, which will mislead if applied to ancient terminology. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=share&v=8iYfnPVgBEI&app=desktop>.

89 E.g., R.D. Gross, *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour* (London, 2nd ed. 1992) 98. This is a handbook for first year university students of psychology.

L. Schumacher claims essentially the same for modern philosophy: 'On the modern scene ... religious knowledge and ordinary knowledge are not usually conceived in such a closely related fashion. In point of fact, revelation is for modern philosophers something quite irrelevant to reason; it is therefore something quite different than it was for Augustine.' ('Theo-logic', 381).

90 Rist has located ancient texts in which this demarcation line between spiritual and carnal is present: '... Plato's original understanding of *eros* and the nature of erotic desire, whether carnal or sublimated, wholly or in part, had been toned down by Plotinus, Augustine's principal source, had long provoked a Christian ... unease which invited suppression and 'bowdlerization', such that the perceptive thrust of the theory—and of its possible development—could easily be blunted, rejected or simply ignored.' (*Augustine Deformed*, 63). Rist explains in note 2 that "bowdlerization" often took the form (as in 1st c. Jewish thinker Philo) of attempting to separate carnal from spiritual desires and objectives as radically opposed, thus destroying, (rather than leaving behind as wholly insufficient) the first steps of the Platonic ladder-Diotima's outlook of Socrates in *The Symposium*. ...

A parallel question could be raised in Chapter 4.4.3 concerning Augustine's notion of intellectual vision in *Gen. litt.* XII: why does Augustine apply the term 'intellectual' to a vision which involves seeing God? Augustine's conception of intellectual vision also entails experiencing ecstasy. Ecstasy and religious experience would also seem to us today as belonging solely to the realm of emotions. Along with religious sentiment and love, these are generally cast into the realm of the irrational. It must first be established that ancient thinkers held different notions about the human being than we do today. Our contemporary views seem to be particularly colored by thinkers from the age of Enlightenment.⁹¹

To illustrate this further, Augustine distinguished humans from animals in *Trin.* with the simple observation that humans walk upright and that the human head is the part of the body in closest proximity to the sky. This would be analogous to the *imago Dei*, the highest part of the soul—being closest to God. Further he mentioned that humans are anatomically equipped to gaze up at the stars, unlike four-legged animals (*Trin.* XII.1.1). This conception could correspond to some extent with contemporary ideas concerning the human head as containing the brain, the center of our intellectual functioning and nervous system. But the human mind, according to Augustine, is not limited to rational brain or intellectual functions, it functions as a whole, inseparable from the spirit, the soul and the heart.⁹² The ancient conception of the human spirit or mind encompasses both emotions and love which are not entirely set apart from the *ratio*—the conscious, thinking mind. Nor do the terms 'intellect' or 'rational'⁹³ for Augustine and Plotinus bear the same connotations as they do today: of being separate faculties of the mind which solely deal with processing empirical information and factual reality. The discrepancy between the modern and ancient usage of these terms leave many doors open to misinterpret Augustine and Plotinus and in particular when discussing the topic of 'Christian Platonism'.

Christian interpreters after Origen found it safer ... to distinguish carnal love as normally of Satan, while continuing to use its vividly carnal language for "mystical" purposes.'

- 91 Such as the Deists, see W. Bristow, 'Enlightenment', in: E.N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enlightenment/#RelEnl>.
- 92 For Plotinus and Augustine, the mind and the activity of thinking are basically regarded as non-physical, although they can possess materiality in varying degrees, see *Civ. Dei* VIII.5–7, in which Augustine endorses this aspect of Platonism.
- 93 M. Stróżyński observes that Plotinus' term 'rational' does not mean thinking discursively but as having a structure that is in accord with reason. God is transrational but this does not mean that God is not rational (*Mystical Experience*, 202, note 67). The same applies to Augustine's conception of the Holy Trinity.

In spite of the general differences in mentality which have evolved in the last 1600 years, Augustine's and Plotinus' manner of depicting love in the human psyche is in some ways not so estranged from the modern frame of mind. Emotions and love are still recognized today as having positive and negative consequences. Emotions are associated with the world of intimate feelings or sensations which touch or resonate in the depths of the soul, or which motivate taking action or justifying certain decisions. Influenced by the strict separation of head and heart, we nonetheless believe today that emotions, desires and love are generally healthy expressions of the heart and that they as well can stimulate the imagination or be connected in some way to artistic inspiration or intuition. Love and desire is what binds us to others, in friendships, family relations, romantic partnerships and marriages.

Today we still consider emotions negative when they lead to mental confusion, disorder, havoc, vice, lack of self-control or outright egoism. Common to antiquity and today's general view, love and desire can be considered potentially harmful when associated with sensual or frivolous appetites and cravings (like for chocolate or race cars), which are not necessary for survival and do not contribute to long-term, personal happiness; or when the object of one's love has no ultimate significance in itself. Only the experience—the thrill of it, although momentary, is the object. Today we would consider 'loves' of this kind as common to everyone and a part of just 'being human.' We would perhaps also deem them 'irrational' or even senseless and in that respect, they are of lesser value.

On the other hand, Augustine and Plotinus would judge these forms of love—as in frivolous and pointless cravings—as being related to the body especially if the thrill is so overwhelming or enticing that it overrides our common sense and concern for health risks. The motivation behind the pursuit of physically oriented 'loves', including sexual longings, for the pleasure in themselves is in their perspective related to an incorrect attitude or a false sense of reality. (For instance, both denounced Epicureanism.) Yet even both recognized that when a notion of true reality is embraced, physical thrills can sometimes still be difficult to control or overcome.⁹⁴ Both thinkers relate love for external, material objects or physical gratifications as potential vices or evil, which can grow out of proportion and enslave us in addiction. The real tragedy of physical and material loves or longings is that they distract and deter us from our

94 E.g., Augustine tells how his friend Alypius (a deeply pious man) in his youth enjoyed going to the circus to see gladiators fight because of the sheer sensation of seeing violence and bloodshed (*Conf.* VI.8.13; X.31.44–end X).

contemplation of God.⁹⁵ Augustine and Plotinus recommend distancing oneself from things which hold intact the domination of the body over the mind. Both envision a direct bridge from human love to a divine source and the other way around, a Godhead which is the ultimate cause as well as source of all love, thought, illumination, knowledge and rationality.

Love for God in secular contemporary thought is generally regarded as a healthy or benign outflow of religious practice. But religious sentiment can also be cast into the dimension of irrationality—as fiery emotions with malevolent potentials. Religious sentiment can house all kinds of risks and dangers (terrorism, racism, discrimination of other groups in society, bigotry) if evolved to fanaticism. Religious experience and religion in general, is often considered today to belong to the intimate sphere of an individual. Although both Augustine and Plotinus regarded encountering God and truth only within the depths of the individual incorporeal soul (and to a limited degree in the body or the world external to the individual soul), they both attributed universality to the religious experience of higher knowledge and love. Incorrect knowledge of God—especially of God having a material nature, they posited, is potentially harmful because it will mislead and create illusions about ourselves and the world. For both thinkers, the more knowledge one acquires, the more universal it becomes. In the depth of one's heart, it is God's universal truths which an individual truly longs for and loves. True knowledge is less universal when it applies only to the experience of a limited number of individuals. The same is applied to love: true love does not entail loving someone for their body, because the body will degrade and perish; true love does not degrade; it is eternal, purely spiritual which one relishes and delights in while the mind is focused on God. True love nourishes a universal perspective as opposed to a self-oriented one. The subject of the discrepancies between modern and ancient terminology could fill an entire book, therefore we will now depart from this topic and continue further with an introduction in the next point to Augustine's epistemology.

3.8 *The Element Knowledge: Epistemology*

3.8.1 Introduction

Up until this point, a general impression of Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* has been given, illustrating Augustine's exploration of the mind and

95 Both Augustine and Plotinus have been criticized for having 'otherworldly' ambitions and neglecting the presence of God in the material world. Otherworldliness is distinctly expressed in the *Enneads* in I.8.6.10–13: 'We must take a flight from hence ...' (Plotinus citing Homer's *Iliad*.)

the triads which best reflected the Holy Trinity. The best triads, he concluded, involved the elements mind, knowledge and love in various elaborations. The elements love and knowledge in these triads of the image of God were intricately intertwined. Now we need to make an artificial incision and attempt to treat the elements knowledge and love as two separate tongs of the same fork. This incision will facilitate the comparison in Chapters 6–9 of Augustine's doctrines of knowledge and love with Plotinus' epistemology and his notion of "Ερως. We will now zoom in on the element knowledge.

In the introduction of this chapter it was explained that Augustine's order of treatment of subject matter in *Trin.* was not very straightforward nor was the logic of his treatment immediately perceptible. However, there are some advantages in following Augustine's order of presentation: it will highlight the richness and the multiple layers of his doctrine. This complexity is fascinating, yet it also presents a challenge for whomever is striving for a concise and clear summary without redundancy. The overlapping of material is inevitable due to the fact that the elements knowledge and love as well as the conception of *verbum* form together a kind of constellation.

This section will commence with a detailed treatment of the topics of self-knowledge and true knowledge (*verbum*) from books VIII–X. Directly related to self-knowledge and the notion of truth is Augustine's notion of 'self' which will be briefly touched upon and lead us to one of the underlying themes in *Trin.*, Augustine's distinction between the inner and outer man in book XI. There he states that the inner man corresponds to the image of God. Yet the outer man is also of utmost importance to include here in order to obtain a clear differentiation of the region of the mind designated as the *imago Trinitatis*. He then sets out to fully explain sense perception and material images in the framework of his analysis of triads, demonstrating why these triads could not pertain to the image of God. Following this, he explains his theory of the two kinds of knowledge in books XII and XIII, corresponding to the two regions of the mind. The aspect of faith also plays a significant role in Augustine's view on acquiring knowledge and is also related to the motive of 'searching and finding'. There is much said on faith in books XII–XIII; this is an underlying theme which he mentions in various contexts in *Trin.* The main points of sections 2 and 3 on the doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* and Augustine's epistemology will then be examined together.

The subject matter here is not only lengthy but also enormously complex. I have attempted to simplify and conglomerate it into a kind of epistemological system, which Augustine himself, of course, did not do. I owe my understanding of this difficult subject matter in *Trin.* to the studies of experts as Brachtendorf, Ayres and Williams. Yet by correlating these different aspects of Augustine's

epistemology in this section, a unique picture of Augustine's doctrine results which is not recognized in the studies of the scholars just mentioned. Hence my research provides a sharper articulation of what Augustine's epistemology precisely entails.

Before commencing, it would be helpful to explicate the term 'epistemology' in the context of Augustine's doctrine. The term is intended here in a general sense, as in 'the study of knowledge and justified belief', the definition provided by the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. The more extensive definition, provided in the note below, applies to Augustine's thinking in *Trin.* as well, in that he questions how knowledge can be true, how one can obtain it, indicating the source of true knowledge and determining the mind's limitations.⁹⁶

3.8.2 Self-Knowledge (Books VIII–X)⁹⁷

Starting with *Trin.* VII, Augustine proposed to pursue at least four inquiries: 1. how can we become an image of God according to the knowledge of God, unless we know something or understand something about God? 2. how does this knowledge relate to our destiny to know and understand him better, and 3. how can we know or understand anything if we do not already have prior knowledge of it which will make us long to know more? The fourth is: how can we love something which one does not know? (VIII.4.6). The point here is that Augustine appears skeptical about obtaining knowledge of God⁹⁸ and even about the acquisition of true self-knowledge.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Defined narrowly, epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief. As the study of knowledge, epistemology is concerned with the following questions: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge? What are its sources? What is its structure, and what are its limits? As the study of justified belief, epistemology aims to answer questions such as: How we are to understand the concept of justification? What makes justified beliefs justified? Is justification internal or external to one's own mind? Understood more broadly, epistemology is about issues having to do with the creation and dissemination of knowledge in particular areas of inquiry.' M. Steup, 'Epistemology', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition) E.N. Zalta (ed.) <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/epistemology/>.

⁹⁷ Other works of Augustine dealing with self-knowledge, i.e., *Soliloquiorum*; *De quantitate animae*, *De ordine*. See Brachtendorf (*Struktur*, 37–39) for a complete list and explanation of differences with Augustine's treatment in *Trin.*

⁹⁸ In IX.1.1, Augustine underscores Paul's statements (1 Cor. 8:2–3): 'If anybody thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But anyone who loves God, this man is known to Him.' Also: '... so great is the force of thought ... the mind does not see itself.' See also *Trin.* XIV.5.6.

⁹⁹ In his post-Manichaean development, Augustine studied Platonist skepticism for a brief period. (See Chapter 2.1.5.)

We should briefly pause to consider why self-knowledge is of such interest to Augustine. In x.5.7 he explains: 'Why then is the mind commanded to know itself?'¹⁰⁰ I believe it means that it (LZ: the mind) should think about itself and live according to its nature ...'. Torchia justifiably questions as to what living according to its nature could mean for Augustine. Referring to Augustine's words directly following the passage above, he concludes that Augustine is establishing the standard for maintaining the soul's rank between what is above it and what is below it in the hierarchy of realities. Torchia's interpretation is correct, yet Augustine's intention goes much further. He means here that we should strive to love according to our better nature, our truer self, which entails acquiring self-knowledge and the actualization of the intellect, the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*.¹⁰¹ 'Knowing oneself' goes far beyond pondering the personal psychology of an individual.

He describes further in this chapter that the human mind is as a vast landscape with multifarious images stored in the memory; images deriving from one's worldly experiences which one has cherished and attached oneself to (xv.12.21). These images form a person's self-image. The human mind is therefore by its vast multiplicity impossible for itself to truly fathom. Augustine asks God how we can fathom him if we cannot even fathom ourselves: '... can any man comprehend this wisdom, which is simultaneously prudence, simultaneously knowledge, seeing that we cannot even comprehend our own?' (xv.7.13).¹⁰² In his prayer at the end of xv.28.51, Augustine refers to psychological chaos when he pleads: 'Deliver me, o God, from the multitude of words with which I am inwardly afflicted in my soul;' (Translation: McKenna).

Augustine believed in the possibility of acquiring true self-knowledge, as shown earlier. If we did not have this, we would not exist. His conclusion that

100 An allusion to the words inscribed over the shrine at Delphi made famous by Socrates.

101 Torchia (*Restless Mind*, 181) also points to similarities in Plotinus. A comparison: 'Our soul then also is a divine thing, and of a nature different from [the things of sense], like the universal nature of soul; and the human soul is perfect when it has intellect;' (*Enn.* v.1.10.11–13).

102 'Then how can this wisdom by which God knows all things, in such a way that what is called the future, is not being waited for to happen as though it were not there yet, but things past and future are all present with things present; and things are not thought about one for one, with thought moving from one to another, but all things grasped in one glance or view; how, I say, can any man comprehend this wisdom, which is simultaneously prudence simultaneously knowledge, seeing that we cannot even comprehend our own? ... from myself indeed I understand how wonderful and incomprehensible is your knowledge with which you have made me, seeing that I am not even able to comprehend myself whom you have made; and yet a fire burns up in my meditation (Ps. 29:3), causing me to seek your face always (Ps. 105:4).' (xv.7.13) (Translation: McKenna).

humans do not possess the capability to obtain complete self-knowledge forms in fact a parallel with his conclusion on the knowledge of God. God is to some extent intelligible; in book VIII Augustine showed how God is knowable in terms such as invisible Light. We can know God by contemplating the Ideas as standards of judgment.¹⁰³ Yet God as Trinity is predominantly beyond our present attainability.¹⁰⁴ The limitations he imposes on knowledge of self and God do not imply futility or a call to give up the pursuit. The gaps of our knowledge are filled in by constantly searching (which includes finding) as well as by faith. Furthermore, he posits optimistically that beginning with the awareness of our self and the knowledge that the human mind is immaterial, we are surely able to begin to understand God. The best way to understand oneself, his doctrine implies, is to focus on God.¹⁰⁵ One knows oneself truly, not when looking at oneself in this life in terms of the world around us or outside of us, but by searching inwardly while consciously engaged with God.¹⁰⁶ Thus a relationship with oneself becomes deeper with the progressive intensity of a relationship with God. Accordingly, a correct self-image will be obtained simultaneously with the gradual assimilation of knowledge of God, such as the divine Ideas, Christ's Incarnation, the mystery of the Holy Trinity or divine Wisdom. An assimilation which in turn is dependent upon God's grace.

103 Treated in section 2 in: 'Trinitarian Godhead ...' e.g., 2.6: 'God is Love and Good'.

104 See in section 2: 'God is Intelligible and Incomprehensible' and *Trin.* XV.14.24, etc.

105 I.e., *Trin.* IX.6.11: one knows the truth in oneself by contemplating the divine principles, the Forms, which serve as standards of judgment; IX.8.13: in order to love oneself and others, God's love must be involved; X.7.10, X.12.19: the material images in the memory do not pertain to the true self. In contemplating the divine Forms, one sees who one truly is, the image of God; XIV.1.1 and 12.15: one sees what does not pertain to this true self, which are the images from the world applied to the self. In experiencing God one sees also the infirmity of one's will, sins, wounds and traumas caused by unhealthy loves—or loves which are not geared to the common good of all.

R. Williams summarizes this notion in Augustine's doctrine: 'We are not able to know or love ourselves accurately unless we know and love ourselves as known and loved by God. ... Self-understanding as a creature in the fullest sense involves an awareness of a loving creator ... in the human mind is the reflection of God's love and so of God's sapiential Being. It (LZ: self-understanding) is to become aware of the all pervasiveness in the human mind and in human life of the divine *caritas*.' ('*Sapientia*', 319–320, 326); W. Hanky's summary: ('Mind', *AttA*, 563–567): 'When it comes to the true knowledge of itself, mind comes to God. Truth is the Divine Mind of Word (564) ... So self-knowledge and the knowledge of God are inescapably intertwined and include knowledge of all else.' (566); Brachtendorf discusses how Augustine expresses this notion in *De ordine* 2.18, etc. (Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 36–37).

106 Zwollo, 'Prayer', 287, note 18.

The positive outcome of self-knowledge is further substantiated in books IX–X in which Augustine is inspired by Socrates' adage, quoting the maxim of the Delphic oracle: Know yourself!¹⁰⁷ Here Augustine identifies two ways of knowing oneself: by *cogitatio sui* and *notitia sui*. The first kind of self-knowledge, *cogitare*, involves discursive thinking and contemplating one's particular, individual characteristics (x.5.7, 7.9). *Se nosse* is a truer kind of self-knowledge, involving an immediate, intuitive self-awareness of one's existence (x.4.6).¹⁰⁸ The activities of the verbs *nosse* and *cogitare* also entail the gradual act of self-knowing involved with self-love in recognizing truth. We could say that the differentiations *se nosse* and *se cogitare* correspond to some extent to Augustine's distinction of two kinds of knowledge: *scientia* and *sapientia* which will be discussed below. Noteworthy here is the differentiation of our normal mode of thinking and the consciousness of the *imago Dei* which also parallels Augustine's distinction between spiritual and intellectual vision (*Gen. litt.* XII.6.15, etc.). This distinction is elaborated further in the two parts of the rational soul: *ratio superior* (intellect) and *ratio inferior*; and *scientia* as opposed to *sapientia*.¹⁰⁹

Augustine's conclusions in *Trin.* VIII–XV correspond to his famous statements in *Soliloquiorum*. There he postulates that by nature every soul desires to know and specifies that one desires primarily two things: to know oneself (one's soul) and to know God.¹¹⁰ Hence, Augustine attributes to the higher intellectual consciousness, the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*, the longing to know oneself, to know, to see and understand God's Being in a more profound manner. A question we could raise here about Augustine's notion of self-knowledge is whether he intended true self-knowledge to be obtained by means of a *visio intellectualis*? We saw in Chapter 4.4 how Augustine borrowed directly the characteristics of Plotinus' doctrine of the intellect to girth his theory of intellectual vision in *Gen. litt.* XII. These characteristics were, among others, the intuitive and immediate grasp of the Ideas and a purely imageless consciousness. In Augustine's conception of self-knowledge in *Trin.*, it is evident that he has integrated more aspects

107 *Trin.* x.5.7; relayed by Socrates in many of Plato's works, e.g., *Phaedrus* (229E); Plotinus: *Enn.* VI.7.35.20–28.

108 For a more detailed analysis of the difference between *se cogitare* and *se nosse*, see Agaësse, *BA* 16, 605–606. According to the author, *se nosse* represents implicit, 'pre-conscious' knowledge. Augustine's two types of self-knowledge are an object of discussion within the framework of the indebtedness to Plotinus and are also discussed extensively in Chapter 7.

109 In xv.14–15, Augustine treats again the topic of the human *verbum*, where he uses the terms *cogitare* and *scientia* for knowing or for knowledge in the sense that the *verbum* or true knowledge is a product or an image of the mind.

110 *Deum et animam scire cupio. Soliloquiorum* 1.6; *Trin.* VIII.3.4, 8.12 and 10.14, XII.14.22, et al.

of Plotinus' epistemology, some of the same characteristics from his theory of intellectual vision, which are intended in *Trin.* to be already understood, such as the immediacy of comprehension in *se nosse*. The correspondence of Augustine's conception of *se nosse* to intellectual vision, which traces back to Plotinus' doctrine, will be explored in the forthcoming subsections.

3.8.3 True Knowledge and the *verbum intimum*, the Inner Word (Books VIII–X; XIV)¹¹¹

Augustine's conception of *verbum* was mentioned several times in passing in previous sections. In book VIII, where he introduces this term, it is literally translated as 'word'. However the underlying meaning of this term is not very clear here, nor in the exposition in this chapter where it was mentioned. It is only when Augustine describes it again in *Trin.* XIV does its significance begin to coagulate.¹¹² An inner word signifies a thought, a true thought, yet one which is not yet spoken (IX.10.15). Augustine explains how a word is brought forth (born) from one's own mind, initially from one's own storehouse of external images (*phantasia/phantasmata*) in the memory.¹¹³ In order for the sense data to become knowledge, it must be formed into thoughts by the workings of *cogitatio*.¹¹⁴ Augustine explains that one's own knowledge is true (which constitutes a *verbum*) insofar that it faithfully reflects what one already knows.

From this we can gather that when the mind knows and approves itself (*se mens ipsa novit atque approbat*), this knowledge (*notitia*) is its word (*verbum*) in such a way that it matches exactly and is equal to it and identical,

111 VIII.9.13; IX.7.12–13, 9.14, 11.16 and XV.10.17–18, 11.20, 12.22, 14.24; chapters: 15, 16, 21, 24.

112 Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 154–159, 266–281. Augustine's notion of *verbum* in *Trin.* as a theory of language which will not be dealt with here (see Brachtendorf, *ibidem*, 282–314).

113 As in e.g., *Gen. litt.* XII.6–11, *Trin.* VIII.5.8, IX.6.10, X.2.4, XI.3.6, 4.7, 5.8, and 10.17.

114 This important term in Augustine's epistemology (used throughout i.e., *Trin.* XI) has no equivalent in modern language. It is often translated as 'thinking'. Although it has some affinities to *verbum* in the sense of 'thought', it is nonetheless a different concept. See Sullivan, *Image of God*, 97-note 50, 111; Gilson, *Introduction*, 282; E. Bermon, *Le cogitatio dans la pensée de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 2001) 395–410; T. Breyfogle, 'Imagination' *Atta*, 442–443; O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987); in association with imagination, 106–129; Brian Stock, *Inner Dialogues*, 62–120: specifically on his usage in *Trin.*: 111–120.

Note that the conscious self can also be designated by Augustine as *cogito* (*cogito ergo sum*). Recall that Augustine designated the soul in *Gen. litt.* as an individual *ratio* (Plotinus, as λόγος). The process of *cogitatio* takes place predominantly in the *ratio inferior*, the region of the soul which involves discursive thought or knowledge, such as *scientia* [parallel to Plotinus' διανοητικόν (λόγος)]. *Cogitatio* will be treated in this context below. (For the comparison to Plotinus' theory of knowledge, see Chapter 7.2.5 and 7.2.6.)

since it (LZ: this knowledge) is neither knowledge (*notitia*) of an inferior thing like body nor of a superior one like God (LZ: that is, this knowledge is self-knowledge). And while any knowledge (*notitia*) has a likeness to the thing it knows (*novit*), that is, to the thing it is the knowledge (*notitia*) of, this knowledge (*notitia*) by which the knowing mind is known (*quae novit, est nota*) has a perfect and equal likeness. And the reason it is both image (*imago*) and word (*verbum*), is that it is expressed from the mind when it is made equal to it by knowing (*cognoscendo*) it; and what is begotten is equal to the begetter.

IX.11.16

This intriguing passage signifies, according to McKenna, that the thought—word arising from self-knowledge is an image of the reality it reflects. Since it is identical to it—thus a perfect image of it—it constitutes therefore perfect knowledge.¹¹⁵ McKenna's interpretation is only partially correct. Augustine does indeed say that a *verbum* is a perfect image, but it is highly unlikely that Augustine meant that this image constitutes 'perfect knowledge'. We must understand this statement in the context of Augustine's motives in *Trin.* as well as his whole epistemology. By claiming that the *verbum* is a perfect *imago* of the *mens* (the first element of the triad *mens-notitia-amor*), the *verbum* is hence equal to *mens* as well as to *notitia*. The *verbum* constitutes the knowledge of the individual mind and because it images it perfectly, only in that sense is it a true, perfect image. In the long run, Augustine is attempting to illustrate with this passage how the mind is an image of the triune Godhead. The Holy Trinity, as he explained it, includes the Son as a Perfect Image of the Father, as in: 'what is begotten is equal to the begetter' in the quote above.

The 'perfection' of this human knowledge can only be relevant to the mind or knowledge it images and hence does not necessarily in itself constitute perfect, true (universal) knowledge. A distinct parallel exists here between Augustine's (and Plotinus') theorem of *intellectualis = intelligibilis*, which dictated that intellection is equal to the intelligible (*Gen. litt.* XII.10.21). Hence the *verbum* in the passage above, in which the perfect imaging of the mind is posited, would only exclusively apply to self-knowledge, and more specifically, the self-knowledge which Augustine posits as *se nosse* (as indicated in the Latin terms in the quote). As such, its 'perfection' is of limited value.

A *verbum intimum* in the *mens humana* is derived from the ontological level of the human mind and shares characteristics with matter: it is changeable and

¹¹⁵ McKenna, *Trinity*, 37.

temporal. As Augustine expounded in *Gen. litt.* XII in his theory of three visions, the transiency of material, intramental images are what makes worldly knowledge fallible or not 100% reliable. Their source is the outer visual world. The created, physical world cannot constitute a reliable source of ultimate truth, not only because of its temporality and mutability, but also because it only contains remnants of truth. Material things, as well as visual intramental images only contain *vestigia* of divine truth.¹¹⁶ Thus self-knowledge involving *se cogitare* also produces a *verbum*, a *verbum* of material images (VIII.6.9). In this sense, the thought (*verbum*) is to some extent equal to the content of the mind which produces it.¹¹⁷ Yet only the *verbum* produced by *notitia sui* complies with the theorem *intellectualis = intelligibilis*. Hence, it approaches universality and also intellectual vision. Engaged in the latter, the soul is illuminated by wisdom, the *Verbum Dei*, who is ultimate Truth. From this we may deduce that *notitia sui* constitutes a *verbum* corresponding to the other characteristics of a *visio intellectualis*, such as infallibility. Yet we must proceed further in order to get to the bottom of this inquiry.

Human knowledge, like human life, is subject to change. Knowledge (*verba*) can be born and die as in a loss of memory (XV.15.25). Augustine insists however that certain unchangeable true knowledge is possible for humans to obtain from within themselves. For example: we know that we exist and we do not doubt this. This knowledge remains certain as long as we exist. However, the *mens humana* does not produce from itself an eternal word. This is because, among other things, human nature cannot keep its attention focused on eternity. On the other hand, the image of God is destined to eternal life and to ascertain eternally that the mind exists. Contemplating eternal thought is not the same as contemplating one's life history. Because while doing the latter, we cease thinking of eternity (X.10.14 and 16). This differentiation is important because eternal knowledge is that towards which the *imago Dei* is oriented.

The question now for Augustine, is how to arrive at true knowledge which is not just true for the individual but universally true? How is truth extracted from vestiges which are contained in the intramental physical images? Fortunately the mind has a way to make up for its own infallibility and potential instability: with its rational intelligence, it is able to judge the inner physical images and determine the universal truth in them (X.5.7). To do this, it focuses on the Ideas, which serve as standards or norms of judgment, which he deems often in *Trin.* as 'the eternal principles' or *Rationes*.¹¹⁸

116 *Trin.* VI.10.12; XII.5.5; Vestiges are treated below.

117 XV.15.24–25.

118 On *Rationes* as Ideas in *Gen. litt.*, see Chapter 4.2.

Therefore we pass judgment upon these particular things according to that form of the eternal truth and we perceive that form through the eye of the rational mind (*rationalis mentis intuitu*) ... For we form images of bodies in our mind or see bodies through the body in one way, but we comprehend in a different way the patterns (*rationes*) and the ineffably beautiful art¹¹⁹ of such forms, as are above the eye of the mind (*aciem mentis*), by simple intelligence.

IX.7.11 (Translation: McKenna)

Augustine confirms in *Trin.*, as he did in *Gen. litt.*, that a mental visualization derived from material elements which are copies of the archetypal ideals, is substantially defective. It seldom complies with the ideal norm, the eternal Idea. Furthermore, the mind or memory cannot reproduce the visual object perfectly. Universal or divine knowledge must be acquired through the intellect (referred to in the quote above as *the eye of the mind ... simple intelligence*). While contemplating a divine model (or the eternal principles), the interiorized data from the physical sense world will then be scrutinized by our judgment in light of its corresponding 'standard'. This has to do with 'seeing God's Form' which entails conceiving the truth in an immediate grasp, as in intuition—as in a *visio intellectualis*: by which the divine Light of Truth touches the human mind and opens it in order to facilitate deeper insight. God communicates through the intelligible; true knowledge or wisdom is only acquired by a conversion to the *Verbum Dei*.

Thus in response to the inquiry posed earlier, an inner *verbum* which is universally true, would certainly refer to the knowledge of a corresponding eternal Idea, as opposed to the particular truth of an individual or a group of individuals. Additionally, the theorem that intellectual vision is equal to the sight of the intelligible, is applicable here (IX.7.12). Yet to grasp this truth, the assistance of the *Verbum Dei* is needed: Christ brings us to contemplation of God.¹²⁰

In *Trin.* XV.12.22, Augustine discusses the human *verbum intimum* which he described in books VIII–X in the context of the *Verbum Dei*, Son of God, equal to God the Father.

¹¹⁹ *artemque ineffabiliter pulchram*; *Ars* is an important term which Augustine uses to signify normative knowledge, as in a standard reference of judgement (e.g., in the sense of grammar *ars grammatica* in language, e.g., *Contra Faustum* 22.45) or in judging the (mental) images. *Ars* is also a Form, referring to the formation of a visual, physical image. *Ars* in that sense is unchangeable and eternal. See K.-H. Lütke, 'Ars', *A-L*. vol. 1, 459–465, i.e., in reference to thinking: *artes liberales, ratiocinando, ars humana, ars divina*, etc.

¹²⁰ For example in I.8.17, XIV.14.20, XV.11.20.

But that word of ours, which has neither sound nor thought of sound, is the word of that thing which we inwardly speak by seeing it, and therefore belongs to no language, hence in this enigma there is a likeness, be what it may, to the Word of God who is also God since it is also so born from our knowledge as that Word was also born from the knowledge of the Father.

XV.14.24 (Translation: McKenna)

Here he refers to a thought which was not yet expressed in human language (as a literal 'word'). A *verbum* expressed audibly in human language manifests as sound momentarily in the sense world, yet the sounds disappear immediately after the thought is expressed. Augustine indicates in the passage above that it is the meaning of a word (or really the meaning of a combination of words), after being heard, which is the real *verbum*, which is retained by the perceiving soul. As such, Augustine compares the human word, which is formed from one's mind or self-knowledge, with the eternal Word of God the Father, who is the pure Form of God the Father and perfectly equal to him (*forma simplex et simpliciter aequalis ...*).¹²¹ In this way, the human *verbum* resembles the divine *Verbum*, it is a perfect image of what one knows.¹²² This *verbum intimum* does not pertain to any language; yet it is not an eternal Word as the Son, who is absolute Truth.

Now let us integrate this concept back into the broader context of Augustine's analysis of the trinity of *mens-notitia-amor*. The element love also plays a salient role in Augustine's conception of *verbum intimum* (IX.8.13). While discerning truth, love manifests as an inner appreciation, intuition, approbation or confirmation that a particular knowledge is true conforming to what one knows in one's own mind to be true (VIII.6.9). As such love binds knowledge to the mind. The dynamic interrelation in this triad is what creates a unity in the human mind. In turn, this triad reflects in some vague way the perfect unity of the Holy Trinity (IX.8.13). Hence, through his notions of knowledge, *verbum* and love, Augustine is gradually constructing the relationship between the *imago Trinitatis* and the Holy Trinity; and at the same time, the relationship between the human image, its personal truth *verba* and the *Verbum Dei*, the Perfect Image. The inner workings of the mind's love and knowledge encom-

¹²¹ It is difficult to find a suitable quote here which is short enough to illustrate this. See XV.10.19: on how the *verbum* is similar to the *Verbum Dei*. Also XV.11.20, 12.22–24, 15.25, 16.26, etc.

¹²² XV.12.22: 'This is the word (LZ: human word) that belongs to no language, the true word about a true thing, having nothing from itself, but everything from that knowledge from which it is born.' (Translation: McKenna).

pass a natural growth process towards God, towards the immaterial, eternal and immutable. Augustine's conviction here is that God's truth and wisdom must be recognized by the individual intuitively in one's conscious experience of one's own love, while in search of ultimate truth. In light of Augustine's ideas on self-knowledge and truth, there are some important remarks to be made on Augustine's conception of self.

3.8.4 Self-Knowledge and Truth: the Different 'Selves' (Books X–XI)

In the preceding point, we saw how Augustine differentiated two kinds of self-knowledge: both resulted in a word of truth. One was a higher form of self-knowledge, which was universal and pertained to the *imago Trinitatis*. The other contained material images and pertained more to the personal life and thoughts of an individual. These differentiations were embodied respectively in the terms *se nosse* and *se cogitare*. As such it can be asserted that in his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, Augustine generally differentiated between two 'selves': a higher and a lower.¹²³ Additionally, in book XI, Augustine distinguished the inner and outer man, inspired by passages in the letters of Paul.¹²⁴ In the next subsection, we will see that this differentiation is constantly present in Augustine's analysis and that it matches up approximately to his differentiation of *se cogitare* and *se nosse* as well.

Although Augustine did not discourage the development of the historical self, it is the *homo interior* to whom he clearly gives preference in the search for God. Due to its capacity to rise to a higher form of consciousness, it can come to a truer understanding of its own mind, as well as of the human mind in a broader sense. The attainment of universal awareness runs parallel to the gradual assimilation and participation¹²⁵ of the immaterial and divine. Within this process of spiritual development, he also prescribed evolving beyond from the 'I' frame of mind and towards the 'we' consciousness,¹²⁶ wherein one's individual self-knowledge becomes more and more knowledge of 'us', universal knowledge of humanity.

A great deal of literature has been published in the past decade on Augustine's conception of the 'self'.¹²⁷ Many of these publications are not directly rel-

¹²³ See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 137.

¹²⁴ Plato and Plotinus also speak of the inner and outer man; Plotinus: e.g., *Enn.* III.2.15–59.

¹²⁵ On how Augustine transformed the Platonic notion of participation: M. Smalbrugge, 'La notion de la participation chez Augustin. Quelques observations sur le rapport Christianisme-Platonisme', in: B. Bruning, M. Lamberigts, J. van Houtem (eds.) *Collectanea Augustiniana, Mélanges T.J. van Bavel* (Louvain, 1990) 333–347.

¹²⁶ *Trin.* XII.8.13, 9.14, 10.15 and 11.16.

¹²⁷ Augustine's treatment of self-knowledge and self-love in books VIII, IX and X of *Trin.* has

evant to this study because the inquiries are oriented to determining whether Augustine is the source of our contemporary sense of 'individual self'. The present study will not go any further into Augustine's conception of self or enter into these discussions. In C. Taylor's chapter on Augustine's conception of self, he delineated in a praiseworthy manner the 'two selves' from Augustine's doctrines which are reflected in the treatment above. However, there are likely other 'selves' which Augustine denotes, one of which Taylor does not mention. That is the highest obtainable self which is now scarcely imaginable for us, because it will be realized in the afterlife at the time of the resurrection. At that time, saintly human souls will become godlike or equal to the angels or Christ. This 'self' will have reached the final destination and obtained a full intellectual vision—as a perfected image of God.

Now, to complete the epistemology which complements his analysis of the mental triads, we will proceed to *Trin.* XI–XV. These books are largely devoted to elaborating a theory of knowledge which includes all possible cognitive acts of the human mind: sense perception, imagination, practical reason, faith and understanding in contemplation.

3.8.5 Sense Perception and Material Images (The Outer Man) (Book XI)
At the commencement of book XI,¹²⁸ Augustine announces that before being able to truly fathom this higher region, which is 'the inner man', one may not merely skip over 'the outer man'.¹²⁹ In Augustine's commentaries on Genesis,

been of great interest in the last few decades for authors dealing with the modern conception of self. Some researchers attribute Augustine as being the first to have instigated this concept in the antique world, such as Cary (*Invention Self*). Others, such as O'Daly, have correctly attributed the 'invention' of the conception of the self to Plotinus from where Augustine originally must have obtained his inspiration [*Augustine's Philosophy of Mind; Plotinus Philosophy of the Self* (Shannon, 1973)]. Other literature on Augustine's conception of the self: O. O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven, 1980); C. Horn, 'Selbstbezüglichkeit des Geistes'; Stock, *Inner Dialogues*; Taylor, *Sources of the Self*; G. Verbeke, 'Connaissance de soi et connaissance de Dieu', *Augustiniana* IV, 1954, 495–515; Sorabji, *Self*. One of the most recent books on Augustine's conception of self is J.-L. Marion's *In the Self's Place: The Approach of St. Augustine* (English translation: J.L. Kosky) (Stanford, 2012). However, Marion's work is based on *Conf.* and not *Trin.*

128 Williams: 'Book 11 does not contribute substantially to the main argument, but spells out ways in which the processes of sense perception form a kind of image in the external life of the human subject of the inner three-foldedness under discussion.' (*Trinitate*, 849). Williams gives an excellent summary of book XI, but is mistaken when he says that this book does not contribute substantially to the main argument. Brachtendorf on the other hand, demonstrates the ascent beginning with book 11 which continues to book XII, leading to the contemplation of the eternal (Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 194–199).

129 XI.1.1.

he posited that the *imago Dei* could only be the strictly immaterial part of the human being because of God's sheer immateriality. His doctrine was often underpinned by quotes from Paul's letters,¹³⁰ 'Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who is being renewed unto the knowledge of God, according to the image of his Creator.' (Col. 3:10) and employing as well Paul's distinction between 'the inner man' with 'the outer man': 'Even if our outer man is decaying, the inner man is being renewed from day to day.' (2 Cor. 4:16). As in *Gen. litt.*, Augustine delineates this distinction in *Trin.* in the following way: the outer man is that life in man which remains on the sense level, whether externally or internally perceived. The inner man, the site of the image, is specifically that human life which is rational and intellectual. This distinction further substantiates Augustine's strategy in defining human nature, the mind and its relationship to the Holy Trinity. Hence, book XI is devoted to analyzing the trinities found in the sense perception of the exterior human, which are the least stable of all inner images due to their transiency and changeability. The subject matter discussed in this book is important for two reasons: it establishes Augustine's (Neo-Platonist) hierarchy of realities encountered in the ascent and provides the background for how a human acquires knowledge, which will be developed in the *Trin.* XII and XIII concerning *scientia* and *sapientia*. After book XI, his epistemology (in books XI–XIII) will unfold in the form of a gradual ascent.

In his exegesis of Genesis, Augustine indicated that the exterior world of a person and all its visible objects cannot be truly considered an 'image', because only the highest part of the human soul can qualify for this designation, on the grounds that it can acquire knowledge of God and become a perfect image of God. Other creatures and things (including the human body) which are perceptible to the physical senses are, in the framework of his theory of Ideas, actually images too, but in a different sense than the *imago Dei*. In the first place, material things are images of Ideas. The human soul is an image of a deity, yet with a pregnant relation to the Ideas in the Creator. In *Trin.* XI–XIII, Augustine returns to this matter to explain it anew in the context of his conception of God as the Holy Trinity. In Chapter 4.2, we noted that in *Gen. litt.* Augustine was apparently unwilling to designate material things as 'images' (as in 'images of Ideas'—as the Platonists did). Now in *Trin.*, he sets out to prove that the whole of the universe, the whole of nature and its operations are permeated with threefold

130 Augustine associates Pauline verses (Col. 3:1–10, 2 Cor. 4:16) with his interpretation of the image of God as the intellect (*Gen. litt.* III.20.30) (See Chapter 4.3). Many references are made to Paul in *Trin.* as well (XIV.16.22–19.25). For example, the 'new man' which in the context of the *imago Dei* is further associated with the 'inner man' (XI.1.1).

traces or 'vestiges' which reflect the triune Godhead.¹³¹ (See the Plotinian equivalent in the note below.¹³²) *Vestigia* are therefore relevant in the context of book XI, where Augustine expounds his theory of the exterior man. He illustrates there the relationship of the vestiges to its author, various trinitarian analogies in reference to the outer man¹³³ and two in particular. The first one, he calls a trinity of external vision, pertaining to the sense of sight: (the object of vision *res*, the act of seeing itself *visio*, and the mind's intention *animi intentio*) (XI.2). The sense of sight, he observes, is the closest in nature to the vision or sight of the mind (xv.3.5). The second trinity of external man is a trinity of internal vision, a natural extension of the first trinity, created by information obtained from the external senses directed inwardly to become *imagines* or *phantasiae*. The trinity effectuated in this way consists of: memory, internal vision, and will. *Voluntas* is required here to join the initial two: *memoria sensibilis, interna visio, voluntas quae utrumque copulat* (XI.3.6).¹³⁴ When these three elements are combined into one, they form what Augustine defines as *cogitatio*. (This important term will be elaborated below.) The second trinity of the outer man described above forms a bridge to the trinities in the inner man, which will lead to acquiring true knowledge—wisdom, associated with becoming an *imago Dei*. The trinities of the outer man, as already mentioned, do not qualify as images of the divine Trinity (XI.5.8). These trinities are countless: the imaginary visions of the thinking person multiply and change in recollection and do this in numerous ways (XI.8).

In Augustine's analysis of the triads, the aspects of the outer man become increasing more inward and approach the *homo interior*. The latter makes up a part of the *mens*, which, as mentioned in *Gen. litt.*, was the location of the *imago Dei*. Now in *Trin.*, Augustine is striving here for a clearer differentiation of the rational soul or *mens*. In *Trin. x.*, this differentiation was indeed sharpened, as

131 *Trin.* VI.10.12, XII.5.5; On vestiges, see Sullivan, *Image of God*, 86.

132 Plotinus uses the term ἕχρος translated as 'trace' as synonym for 'image' (e.g., εἰχών) as in the Soul-image/trace of the Intellect; the Intellect-image/trace of the One (*Enn.* VI.7.15–10, 17, 18.1–15, VI.7.20). He uses this term as well to depict the equivalent as above: how the divine is present in material things or bodies, although this manifestation is not in any way the divine itself (e.g., the image as εἰδωλον) (See Chapter 3.2).

133 S. Macdonald gives a critical evaluation of Augustine's claims here. See 'Augustine's Cognitive Voluntarism', in: Bermon, *Trinitate*, 235–250.

134 XI.3.6: 'Even when the form of the body is taken away which was perceived by the bodily senses, there remains a likeness of it in the memory to which the will can again turn the attention to be formed by it from within, just as the sense was formed from without, by the sensible corporal object presented to it.' Augustine says here that the mind as 'will' is formed by the mental pictures, just as the sense of sight is formed by corporeal images. This formation is the work of *cogitatio*.

we already saw, in the two types of self-knowledge and various *verba*. Memory was indicated as an essential component of the most important trinity of the intellect in book x.¹³⁵ The functioning of the memory for Augustine is not limited to recollection of the past, it is also a function which enables a person to develop a relationship to oneself (as in reflecting upon oneself: remembering or recalling oneself). It is thus the mental facility which possesses self-awareness and through this, it resembles the Holy Trinity.

Augustine explains human memory in one's relationship to God in the following way: anything which serves as an object of reflection requires the exercise of memory for continuous or repeated meditations. Memory is what permits us to return to transient thoughts which escape us, such as experiences of God or completely immaterial, eternal reality (*Trin.* XII.14.23). In *Conf.* VII, Augustine insisted that the will was too weak to remain in God's light. He pointed out there that human memory, too, was defective: one forgets God all too easily (*Conf.* X.17.26).

Augustine designates memory as the primary facility for knowledge acquisition. The mental images pertaining to the outer human supply the memory with information (our modern term: 'stimuli') which will be processed into knowledge (*scientia*). But the question is how these images become knowledge? The other knowledge-gathering function of the mind is encompassed in the term *cogitatio*.¹³⁶ This term denotes the collecting and bringing together of data transmitted from outside of oneself from the physical experiential world into the memory, synthesizing the data into knowledge. Through *cogitatio*, knowledge is thus committed to memory and retrieved as well (in spite of it being forgotten from time to time). Thus in the last trinity of outer man, Augustine connects *cogitatio* to *memoria* as well as to the conscious doings of the will, the intention of one's gaze, representing them as the mental cogs and wheels in the process of knowledge acquisition, functioning interdependently.¹³⁷ *Cogitare* is the verb Augustine uses to describe the lower kind of self-understanding and self-knowing which is present in our daily state of consciousness (*Trin.* X.4.6).

135 The human memory is not a reflection of 'God's memory'. The latter is not possible because human memory is completely temporally oriented, while God's mind is eternal, not temporal. In God, memory and foresight are one and the same (*Trin.* XV.7.13).

136 See note 114.

137 C. Tornau's summary of Augustine's epistemology in the latter books of *Trin.* indicates that Augustine has various terms for the cognitive faculty of the mind, such as *contuitus*, *obtus*, *cogitatio* and *intellegentia*. 'The Background of Augustine's Triadic Epistemology in *De Trinitate* 11–15, A Suggestion', in: Bermon, *Trinitate*, 251–266.

This brings Augustine to the question as to how these fleeting mental (material) images can eventually lead to universal truth? In order to obtain universally true knowledge, one must necessarily pass through the realm of vestiges, those of the external man and proceed to the inner man. His treatment of memory and mental images in book XI forms the stepping stones to the ascent to the consciousness in which knowledge becomes progressively less material, referring to his exegesis of Gen. 1:26 of the image of God (concentrated in XII.6.6–7.12).¹³⁸ This elevation will ultimately lead up to wisdom and to the source of Wisdom (XII.5.5), which is delineated in book XII and onwards.

3.8.6 Lower and Higher Knowledge: Interior Man (Books XII and XIII)
Starting with XII.12.17, Augustine proceeds to differentiate true knowledge, distinguishing in the rational soul *mens* a higher and lower level of reasoning, *ratio superior* and *ratio inferior*. It is the task of higher reason to judge material things or internal material images according to immaterial eternal principles. Lower reason is that which manages and maintains things of matter, sense and temporality (XII.4.4).¹³⁹ *Ratio superior* and *inferior* are complementary. Both are necessary for mental functioning, for knowledge acquisition and for acquiring wisdom. Trinities can be found in the realm of *ratio inferior* but they do not image the Holy Trinity. The *imago Dei* is only in the *ratio superior* (XII.4.4, 7.10).

His two categories of knowledge, *scientia* and *sapientia*¹⁴⁰ correspond generally to the differentiation of lower and higher reason (XII.12.17).¹⁴¹ Augustine describes the two kinds of knowledge as in a kind of marriage between con-

¹³⁸ In XII.6.6–7.12, Augustine returns to an extensive treatment of the *imago Dei* in a variety of contexts, many of which were already covered in earlier books. This includes his discussion of incorrect interpretations of Gen. 1:26 (XII.6.7) and the incorporeal image as location of renewal by the grace of God (XII.7.11).

¹³⁹ Hill, *Trinity*, 322. L. Schumacher correctly identifies the correspondences between Augustine's notion of *ratio inferior* and *superior*; *scientia* and *sapientia* in *Trin.* and his theory of corporeal, spiritual and intellectual visions in *Gen. litt.* XII ('Theo-logic', 384–385).

¹⁴⁰ Williams, 'Sapientia'; Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 199–205; R. Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington, 1969) 60–92. On p. 5, Nash provides a table of Augustine's epistemological ascent.

¹⁴¹ XII.8.13; 12.17. Here Augustine describes *scientia* and *sapientia* as symbolized by Adam and Eve, XII.13.20: Adam and Eva are as one person: Adam, the male, immaterial principle, representing higher reason; Eve, the female, physical principle, the lower. Both sinned. Every human is or has an *imago Dei*, regardless of gender (XII.7.10). In XII.9.14, Augustine treats the fall of the souls of Adam and Eve. Torchia points out: 'Sin in this primal sense (1.2: in the allegory of Adam and Eve) constitutes a fall from mind's contemplation of eternal truths through a proud lust for domination, a carnal lust for sensual pleasure or curious lust for images and phantasms.' (*Restless Mind*, 177). See Chapter 4.3.2.4, 5 and 6.

templation and action: wisdom pertains to contemplation,¹⁴² science to action (XII.12.19). Yet the limits of the Augustine's definitions of *scientia* and *sapientia* are not so strictly defined as with *ratio superior* and *inferior*. *Scientia* is also needed for eternal life; it constitutes the reason-oriented attention which focuses on material things, in order to form knowledge and to improve one's mind and one's life. Unlike *sapientia*, *scientia* can include negative potentials, for instance: acquiring knowledge for the sake of knowledge itself (for the sake of one's status, to boost one's pride) and not for the sake of truth; or as a distraction from God. These dangers can be overcome, Augustine assures, by love for the eternal goods: a love which is always expansive and constructive.

Scientia is, on the other hand, indispensable for acquiring virtues in order to live well (XII.13.21). Wisdom can also pertain to science yet this sagacity is focused on worldly matters. Augustine gives an example of wise science referring to Job 28: 28: 'Behold, piety is wisdom, while to abstain from evil things is knowledge (*scientia*)'. He explains, in this age in which we are now living, we are in the midst of evil from which we should abstain. We do so, by striving for the good, living virtuously and orienting ourselves to eternal matters. All that we do which is reasonable, strong, in moderation and just, is involved with science. From historical *scientia* (such as the incarnation of Christ) we collect examples which are instructive (XII.14.22–23). *Sapientia* is further distinguished from *scientia* in that it involves things which are not of the past or the future, but of eternal, unchangeable being; immaterial realities which are present to the glimpse of the intellect. A gaze at the non-spatial, immobile, eternal concepts is intended only for a few, for the majority of us are too weak to hold on to it.¹⁴³

Memory holds an important function in acquiring science: it facilitates the mind's reproductions of material visual images perceived exteriorly which are then processed by *cogitatio* to produce worldly knowledge. A person retains

142 Ayres describes Augustine's use of contemplation in his earlier works which includes *visio intellectualis* from *Gen. litt.* as the highest level of understanding. He connects this to Augustine's doctrine of faith in the sense of the contemplation of things we do not yet know, in striving for the final blessed vision (Ayres, *Trinity*, 150–152).

143 *Trin.* XII.14.23. Chapter fourteen of this book which describes the *Rationes*, faithfully mirrors the description of the Ideas in *De Ideis* (*Div. qu.* 46). In this essay from the 380's, he traces the theory of Ideas back to Plato and even prior to Plato. It is perhaps not a coincidence that in XII.15.24, Augustine brings up Plato's doctrine of ἀνάμνησις (the pre-existent soul and its recollection of the Ideas) and refutes it (which he also did in *Conf.* x). Hill is critical of Augustine for insufficiently explaining how memory relates to contemplating the Ideas and remembering wisdom. It is 'the Achilles' heel of his theory of knowledge' (Hill, *Trinity*, 339, note 64).

the lessons learned from those images. Additionally, one remembers God, which we could call an intellectual memory, entailing in effect 'imaging God'. This would not include phantasms but something which the *imago Trinitatis* achieves in contemplation (XII.14.22–23). The memory is also helpful for training oneself to see God.¹⁴⁴

In sum, Augustine defines here the parameters of the realm of the *imago Dei* in terms of *sapientia*, the *ratio superior* and contemplation. Although *scientia* and *ratio inferior* pertain to the inner man, because of their connection to the world of the outer man, they cannot belong to the realm of the intellect-*imago Dei*. We saw a similar differentiation in Augustine's conception of self-knowledge. The higher functioning self-knowledge involved the intellectualization of *se nosse*: perceiving one's existence by intuitive and immediate insight. This included perceiving oneself as image of God and judging one's deficiencies. Lower self-knowledge entailed discursive reasoning, the activities of *se cogitare* (XV.7.12). Augustine assured the possibility of reaching *sapientia* through *scientia* through one's own reasoning, but in most cases the mind required divine assistance to accomplish this (XII.17.23).¹⁴⁵ This passage illustrates the transition between these two types of knowledge.

Our knowledge (*scientia*) is therefore Christ and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is He who plants faith in us about temporal things, He who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through Him we go straight toward Him, through knowledge (*scientia*) to wisdom. Without ever turning aside from the one and the same Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

XIII.19.24

As illustrated here, Christ is the Trinitarian person whose mission it is to endow humans with both kinds of knowledge as well as to install faith into their minds. (Augustine's doctrine of faith in *Trin.* will be elaborated on in the next point.) Faith is deemed as a kind of *scientia* and an important step for fathoming the eternal and immaterial, as in understanding God as Trinity (XIII.1.2–2.5). It is essential here, he posits, because God and the Trinity are only intelligible to a limited extent, exceeding the limits of human understanding.

144 I.e., XIV.11.14, 13.17, 14.18, 15.21 and XV.28.51. See Hill, *Trinity*, 339 and Ayres, *Trinity*, 273–318, 304–318.

145 For more on Augustine's depiction of Christ elevating a person's mind from *scientia* to *sapientia*, see Studer, *Trinitate*, 223.

To draw up a short synthesis of Augustine's doctrine of *homo interior* and the two kinds of knowledge: it is the image of God, the intellect, which longs for and has a propensity for true knowledge, wisdom or *sapientia*. It strives to evolve its worldly knowledge based upon temporal, material images to pure, universal knowledge without the material images, to wisdom coming forth from the illumination of Christ (XII.12.17). The question could be raised as to whether Augustine identified obtaining *se nosse*—self-knowledge on the highest level—with *sapientia*. This would be a plausible inference on the condition that self-knowledge was acquired while focused on Christ. Likewise, science would be the knowledge obtained by the outer self, the old or historical self *se cogitare*: the consciousness in our daily lives, characterized by incomplete or temporal knowledge.

Thus in the final books of *Trin.*, Augustine describes a transformation of the self in the framework of the consciousness of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*: in a gradual course of development from the outer to inner man as far as in the afterlife and resurrection; a transformation to the perfection of the image and a complete vision of God.¹⁴⁶ There are indeed many correspondences to be found here in Plotinus' epistemology; in particular, his distinction between *διανοητικόν*, the discursive mode of thinking and *νόησις*, intellectual contemplation; as well as his designation of the intellect as the true self. Yet this comparison requires a more extensive elaboration which will therefore take place in Chapter 7.

3.8.7 Faith and Future Knowledge (Searching and Finding)

In different contexts throughout *Trin.*, Augustine asserts his conviction of the necessity of believing in order to understand. For example, in the context of his conception of the procession of the Holy Trinity in book IV (pertaining to the rule of faith, as he called it in XV.28.51) and also in reference to obtaining divine knowledge, via an ascent from *scientia* to *sapientia*.¹⁴⁷ Faith is thus an important facet of his epistemology, considered as a kind of knowledge in itself. In book XIII, Augustine ascribed faith to the knowledge of temporal things (*scientia*) and not *sapientia*.¹⁴⁸ Ayres' insights are helpful to interject here. He

¹⁴⁶ E.g., XIV.17 23.18–24, 19–25.

¹⁴⁷ *Trin.* VIII.4.7; XII.5.8; XIII.1.2, 3, 4; XIV.2.4–5, 9.12, 19.24, 20.25–26; XV.1.3, 2.2, 2.4; 3, 27.49; On Augustine's notion of faith in *Trin.*: See Ayres, *Trinity*, faith in various contexts, 147–170; Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin*; M. Smalbrugge, 'La nature trinitaire de l'intelligence augustinienne de la foi' (Dissertation, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1998); E. te Selle, 'Faith', *AttA*, 347–350.

¹⁴⁸ In Plotinus' philosophy, the equivalent kind of knowledge to Augustine's *scientia*—based

highlights that in books XII–XIII, Augustine's main concern is expounding the relationship between *scientia* and *sapientia* and especially the kind of *scientia* which is necessary to faith which will draw us to *sapientia*. This has a parallel in the two natures of Christ, which was explained by Augustine in book IV, regarding the eternal Word and the Incarnation. One's faith grows and is shaped by the *scientia* of Christ's life. This *scientia* is acquired by reading Scripture and leads to *sapientia*. Essentially, the one divine Person of Christ embodies both *scientia* and *sapientia* in his two natures. However, Augustine avers that knowledge based upon belief is not the knowledge acquired by the *imago Dei* (*Trin.* XIII.20.26). Evidently man's faith in Christ (*scientia*) is considered as distinct from the contemplation of Christ (*sapientia*), the latter of which encompasses the understanding of the former and indeed pertains to the intellect-image of God.

L. Ayres correctly perceives the explicit connection between Augustine's doctrine of faith and spiritual exercise in regard to Augustine's struggle to imagine the Holy Trinity or its immaterial, immutable reality in all its diversity. He explains Augustine's view that *exercitatio* is instrumental for comprehending the structure of the Incarnation. Thus there is a mutual collaboration between the *imago Dei* and the human Christ involved here, because it is the Incarnation itself which provides such an exercise and is likewise the supplier of faith. *Exercitatio mentis*, like faith, Ayres adds, plays a clear central role in Augustine's anthropology. Mental exercise stimulates reformation of the image, as in overcoming the obsession with the material imagery and fleshy manifestation of Christ.¹⁴⁹ Augustine also emphasizes that it is of importance to find a viable faith that will appropriately enable us to grow in love of something that will actually come to be realized.

Sometimes faith is accorded to things that are false ... what we hope for is that faith in true things will eventually be transformed into the things

upon material images—was generally thought to be δόξα—opinion, not true knowledge. It is likely that Augustine's designation of faith as *scientia* refers to the Platonist conception of δόξα in the general sense above, as knowledge which is not verified as universally true. Augustine intends faith to be understood as a temporary knowledge, a guideline which will be replaced in time with true understanding. As such, faith could be a kind of δόξα—opinion as well. Δόξα, as it occurs in the New Testament, has a broader meaning sometimes coinciding with 'conviction' (πίστις) (i.e., Matt. 3:9, Luke 24:37, 2 Cor. 11:16, etc.). There are many examples of δοκέω in the New Testament used in the sense of 'to appear'. Is Augustine integrating an element of Plotinus' epistemology with the New Testament in a philological and conceptual manner?

149 Ayres, 'Christological Context', 101, 117–118.

themselves; and it is hardly right to say “Faith is vanished” when things that used to be believed come to be seen. Yet it can no longer be called faith ... seeing that faith is defined in the letter to the Hebrews as being the conviction of things that are not seen (Heb. 11:1).

XIII.1.3

In the quote above, we see a continuity of his criticism of Manichaean faith based upon a faulty and materialistic theology which failed to lead to truth and thus did not stimulate substantial knowledge.¹⁵⁰ He assures that in the long run, true knowledge will eventually replace faith. Complete knowledge of God (in the *visio Dei*) is, however, only possible in the afterlife. Further, Augustine encourages a particular strategy of searching *quaerere* and finding *invenire*¹⁵¹ in conjunction with faith, which is of seminal interest to his epistemology. It contributes to resolving some of the tension in his position on the incomprehensibility of God and positive knowledge of God. ‘*Fides quaerit, intellectus invenit*. Faith searches, the intellect finds.’ (XV.1.1 and 2.2).

The safest intent, after all, until we finally get where we are intent on getting and where we are stretching out to, is that of the seeker. And the right intent is the one that sets out from faith. The certitude of faith at least initiates knowledge; but the certitude of knowledge will not be completed until after this life when we see face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). Let this then be what we set our minds on, to know that a disposition to look for the truth is safer than one to presuppose that we know, what is in fact unknown. Let us there so look as men who are going to find, and so find as men who are going to go on looking. For when a man is finished, then it is that he is beginning. (Sir. 18:7).

IX.1.1

The quest for true knowledge must necessarily begin with faith. In this life we only have the certitude of faith; in the next life, the certitude of knowledge.¹⁵² Augustine equates ‘searching’ with desiring or longing for; and ‘finding’ with receiving a certain degree of gratification. The object of the search, the under-

150 See Chapter 2.1.4. *Conf.* 111.6.10.

151 His treatment of *quaerere et invenire* in *Trin.*, e.g., IX.1.1 and XV.2.2–3. See S. Katz, ‘Seek-find’, *AtTA*, 760–761.

152 IX.1.1 and XV.27.49. In IX.1.1, Augustine underscores Paul’s statements (1 Cor. 8:2–3): ‘If anybody thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But anyone who loves God, this man is known to Him.’

standing of God, can never truly be completely 'found' in a single instance, only in piecemeal discoveries, harbored by strong desire. As such, he encourages a never ending quest in which one is continuously discovering new truths. In his 'Prayer to the Trinity' (xv.28.51), Augustine again relates the activities of 'searching and finding' to coming to an understanding of God. 'Give me the strength to seek, You who have caused me to find You, and have given me the hope of finding You more and more.' (Translation: McKenna). In this sense, one must persevere, with the help of God, in the desire to experience God in order to keep finding and discovering him. 'May I remember You, understand You and love You. Increase these things in me until You have reformed me completely.' Note that he is referring here to the second triad from book x: *memoria-intellegentia-amor* which forms the best *imago Trinitatis*. He infers here that longing for knowledge of God (longing for or loving God) must be augmented, expanded and reinforced in order to persist in the goal of perfecting one's image to the greatest extent during earthly existence. Faith serves as well as an aid in persevering through the difficulties of this life.

3.8.8 Synthesis: the *Imago Trinitatis*: Intellect and Epistemology

Augustine's terms 'intellect' or the triune *imago Dei* can be characterized in the following way: as a state of consciousness differentiated from the cognitive faculties in operation in normal, daily activities in the outer world. The differentiation of our normal mode of thinking from the consciousness of the *imago Dei* parallels Augustine's distinction between spiritual and intellectual vision.¹⁵³ The 'image of God' is a contemplative or meditative frame of mind which has as object itself or that which is above itself, such as the eternal, divine Ideas or the three divine Trinitarian persons (all of which constitute 'divine knowledge'). It has an inherent hunger for ultimate truth. By contemplating the divine Ideas, it is thus able to judge information and discern what is ultimately false. The rational soul perceives the relationship of something to God in its degree of resemblance or dissemblance to the divine. It includes self-contemplation, by which it judges itself, how it falls short of being a perfect image of God (while reflecting on the earthly life of the Word of God).

The elevated awareness of the intellect-*imago Trinitatis* involves an intuition or the immediate apprehension of truth by divine illumination, complying with Augustine's definition of *visio intellectualis* in *Gen. litt.* XII. His conception of the intellect-image includes a mental and spiritual development (typified

¹⁵³ *Gen. litt.* XII.6.15, et al.

TABLE 1 Augustine's epistemology

<i>Se cogitare</i> (self-knowledge)	<i>Se nosse</i> (self-knowledge)
<i>Scientia</i>	<i>Sapientia</i>
<i>Ratio inferior</i>	<i>Ratio superior</i>
<i>Homo exterior</i>	<i>Homo interior</i>
Historical self	New self (image of God)

by 'seeking and finding') which is strongly inclined towards universal wisdom, *sapientia*, specifically that of a transcendent, unchanging character. This consciousness is differentiated from analytical discursive thinking and the cognitive processes of producing knowledge from the visible world of material images. This corresponds to Augustine's designation of the human soul in *Gen. litt.* as an individual *ratio*. *Scientia* corresponds to this mode of consciousness in absorbing information from the exterior world which contains only elements of truth. Yet this truth is often limited to the personal or particular (*verbum intimum*) and is therefore unlikely to be universally applicable to the divine. *Scientia* requires Christ's illumination in order to become *sapientia*, as does a *verbum* in order to become higher universal truth administered by Christ, the *Verbum Dei*. The lower rational soul comprises Augustine's view of the old, historical self, which is largely defined by one's experiences in the outer world. The new self, which is acquired by gradual reformation (defined by one's relationship to God), is the true image of God. Augustine's differentiation of the rational soul can be represented in a table, those pertaining to the image of God are on the right hand side.

It is evident here that self-knowledge, as in *se nosse*, refers to intellectual vision, as well as to a *verbum* obtained by contemplating the Ideas. Note that although *sapientia* has a universal or divine character, we can infer that Augustine intended that true self-knowledge while contemplating Christ will result eventually in *sapientia*.¹⁵⁴

Throughout this exposition on the *imago Trinitatis*, we have seen that Augustine's conception of God within his discussion of the human image was highly diversified. Yet basically it boils down to this: the transformation of ordinary consciousness through a strong relationship with the Perfect Image, *Verbum Dei*, Christ, in his two natures which expands to include the consciousness of

154 Augustine would have never characterized the intellect or image of God as the 'divine self', as Plotinus or the Gnostics did.

oneself as an image of the Holy Trinity. The higher consciousness of the *imago Trinitatis* includes the same characteristics of intellectual vision which can differ in degree and intensity.

Additionally, *Trin.* is abundant with spiritual exercises which contribute to the training of one's mind in the consciousness of the image of God. These exercises (particularly in books VIII–X) comprise an exploration of the triadic and immaterial frame of mind in its facets of knowledge and love. By reading these books carefully and with full attention, the mind is engaged with its innermost self, the pure immaterial intellect where no false self-images are present. Exercising the intellect in this way could loosen up the exclusive focus on the historical self and promote awareness of attitudes and intramental pathways which one has not yet tread upon. It could also include expanding one's perspective from the 'I' to the 'we' or a number of other things, such as attempting to envision the Incarnation of Christ or the Godhead as Holy Trinity. Augustine's postulation of the unfathomable and ineffable nature of the divine Trinity contains an important counterpart: his encouragement to persist in longing and searching for the experience of eternity and infinity in good faith that one will actually encounter it. Therefore Augustine prescribed exercising the mind, contemplation, meditation and prayer in order to approach becoming a perfect image of God, and to increase one's awareness of eternity and infinity. In Augustine's epistemology, there are many parallels to be found in Plotinus' philosophy which I mentioned in the text and also sometimes summarized in footnotes. In Chapter 7 these similarities will be examined in more detail and in consideration of Augustine's whole doctrine of the *imago Dei*.

3.9 *Augustine's Doctrine of Love in De Trinitate*¹⁵⁵

3.9.1 Introduction: Defining the Frontiers of the Element Love in This Study

In no other work in which Augustine interprets Gen. 1:26–27, the *imago Dei*, is the theme of love treated so extensively as in *Trin.*¹⁵⁶ His doctrine of love in *Trin.* has many angles. For instance, he equates the terms love *amor* and will *volun-*

¹⁵⁵ I extend my thanks to Dr. Martijn Schrama OSA for his personal comments on this section of my research as well as his articles in Dutch on Augustine's view of love, desire and prayer.

¹⁵⁶ On the primacy of love in Augustine's doctrines: van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 106, 170; van Bavel, *Drie-Eenheid*, 458–459; Gioia, *Epistemology*, 298–302. Augustine also treats love in other works, e.g.: *Conf.* x; his analysis of the Epistle to the Galatians 45 and his sermons on the First Letter of John 8:4.

tas, intricately intertwining the two¹⁵⁷ in the context of the intramental trinities and self-knowledge. Yet in Augustine's thinking, the elements love and will also have distinct significances. For instance, he also applied the notion of *voluntas* to his notion of *cogitatio* (*Trin.* XI), the activity of intentionally focusing upon an object and becoming conscious of it, the result being that it later appears as an image in the memory. Retrieving this image and creating knowledge from the images also entails a conscious act of the will. Yet regarding the triads in his depiction of the *imago Trinitatis*, love and will are extensions of one another and practically synonymous. Additionally, the element *voluntas* conjoined with love,—just as the elements knowledge and mind—, also has its divine counterpart in the Trinitarian Godhead: the Holy Spirit as divine Love and Will. The semantic affinity between love and will becomes more clear when regarding the mental trinities as actual activities in the mind, as loving and 'to be willing', which inspire further semantic variations, such as 'willing', 'wanting', and an associative step further, 'desiring and longing for'.¹⁵⁸ The latter are in fact of major interest here. Thus this section will focus on Augustine's treatment of love, which includes desires or longing, as well as in another sense: 'searching' and 'finding'. It will construct a synthesis of Augustine's general conception of love for the sake of discussing salient points in Plotinus' notion of Ἔρως in Chapter 8.

For the sake of the latter, it is also important to first examine Augustine's terminology of 'love' and his biblical sources. Then in order to illustrate the context of this important element, Augustine's treatment of love and knowledge of the *imago Trinitatis* from books VIII–IX will be reiterated, highlighting the function of the element love in the human trinity *mens-notitia-amor*. The following topics will then be considered: self-love and longings, between truth and delusion; the proper focus or object of love and longings, and lastly, longing and prayer. The final subsection will construct a synthesis of Augustine's doctrine of love in *Trin.*

157 Equating love with will might seem at first sight to be a peculiarity, because in modern thinking, love is generally regarded as pertaining to the emotional or irrational, or even somewhat to the unconscious; the human will is considered today a conscious, rational, driving force in the individual. Augustine's designation of *voluntas* as a conscious intention does approach to a certain extent the modern connotation, but is not a separate facility. See the studies of Rist: *Augustine Deformed*, chapters 1–3.

158 Augustine's terminology for the English word 'desire': *appetitus, concupiens, cupiens*.

3.9.2 Augustine's Terminology of 'Love'

The English word 'love' is the translation of Augustine's terms *amor*, *dilectio* and *caritas*. These terms are generally synonymous and used interchangeably by Augustine.¹⁵⁹ In *Civ. Dei* XIV.7, Augustine even explicates that these three terms in the Scriptures have synonymous meanings. Van Bavel states on Augustine's doctrine of love: 'Augustine does not make an essential difference between all three Latin words ... All three can be good or evil according to the object loved.' Dideberg, in his inventory of these three terms, draws the same conclusions.¹⁶⁰ Yet he notes the fact that there are authors who have made attempts to decipher the differences in these two terms.¹⁶¹ A famous passage from *Trin.* VIII.10.14 on the triad of love demonstrates well how the three terms for love are used interchangeably.

Quid est autem dilectio vel caritas, quam tantopere Scriptura divina laudat et praedicat, nisi amor boni? Amor autem alicujus amantis est, et amore aliquid amatur. Ecce tria sunt; amans, et quod amatur et amor. Quid est ergo amor, nisi quaedum vita duo aliqua copulans, vel copulare appetens, amantem scilicet, et quod amatur? Et hoc etiam in externis carnalibusque amoribus ita est: sed et aliquid purius et liquidius hauriamus, calcata carne ascendamus ad animum. Quid amat animus in amico, nisis animum? Et illic igitur tria sunt: amans, et quod amatur, et amor.

But what is love or charity, which the Divine Scripture praises and proclaims so highly, if not the love of the good? Now love is of someone who loves, and something is loved with love. So then there are three: the lover, the beloved and the love. What else is love, therefore, except a kind of life which binds or seeks to bind some two together, namely the lover and the beloved? And this is so even in external and carnal love. But that we may draw from a purer and clearer source, let us tread the flesh underfoot and

159 T.J. van Bavel, 'Love', *AttA*, 509–516, 509.

160 D. Dideberg, 'Amor', *A-L*, vol. 1, 294–230, 294; 'Caritas', *A-L*, vol. 1, 730–743; and 'Dilectio', *A-L*, vol. 2 Fasc. 1/2: 435–453.

161 He notes many authors who have been consulted for this study, such as: I. Bochet, *Saint Augustin: Le Désir de Dieux*, (Paris, 1982) 280–281; J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 83–110. Burnaby's arguments are not philological in character; he is refuting the distinctions which A. Nygren posited between Christian love and Greek ἔρως in: *Agape and Eros* (London, 1953). Note-worthy is that R. Canning's extensive (and classic) study on Augustine, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbor in St. Augustine* (Leuven, 1993) does not deal with philological distinctions between Augustine's terms for love either.

mount up to the soul. What does the soul love in a friend except the soul? And, therefore, even here there are three: the lover, the beloved and the love.

(Translation: McKenna)

3.9.3 Augustine's Biblical Sources for His Doctrine of Love

Augustine's reflections on human knowledge and knowledge of God in *Trin.* are interwoven into his reflections on love. 'Knowledge of God'—that the image of God will be renewed to the knowledge of God—is an often used quote by Augustine from the letters of Paul. He also leans heavily on Paul's statements concerning love (for example, the definition of love in 1 Cor. 14). His exegesis of 'God is Love' was based on 1 John 4, which also contains passages on loving God and loving one's neighbor, the latter of which is also mentioned in Matt. 22:37–40 and Gal. 5:14. John's epistle also mentions the importance of the knowledge of God.¹⁶² Hence, Augustine's treatment of love is often loaded with scriptural passages, as the quote above reflects.¹⁶³

3.9.4 God-Trinity as Love

Augustine's discussions of this theme revolved around how love, as a spiritual (immaterial) force, played a role in the human mind with the objective of becoming a more perfect resemblance of God. This began in book VIII with a description of God in a concrete manner in terms of love and good. He stated there that God is love and the source and origin of all human love. God is invisible Light and Truth; God is 'Good'. This 'Good' served as criteria for our judgment. Hence by turning to God, the human being became good. But first it was of course necessary to understand what 'good' was in order to understand God and in order to obtain knowledge of God—which was crucial for the renewal of the image (*Trin.* VIII.2–6). To understand the good more profoundly, and God as Love and Good, one contemplated both in the eternal Form.¹⁶⁴ Thus love of God, for Augustine, was the same as loving the eternal principle: the ideal, perfect archetype of something.

¹⁶² See van Geest's explanation of Augustine's commentary on the Epistle of John, how love plays a role in the moment of knowing God: *Incomprehensibility*, 101–106.

¹⁶³ Another excellent example is *Trin.* VIII.7.10.

¹⁶⁴ Correspondences in Plotinus are plentiful: e.g., *Enn.* VI.7.15–17: contemplating the Idea Good makes one good. 'Good' in this context is a Form existing in the Νοῦς (ἀγαθοειδής); the Intellect received the Ideas which are Good from the One, the Good. (Even though the One is formless.); *Enn.* VI.7.9: 'Why desire the Good? All things desire the Good, ... they seek Intellect for their reasoning. But the Good is before Reason (LZ: The One).' Also: VI.7.20.20–25; Desiring the Good (the One) is always for the better.

God as Spirit, Wisdom and Love were expressions from 1John 4 and other bible books (and are also attributes of the Intellect and One in Plotinian theology). Augustine designated Christ the Son as the Creator and Form principle, as well as Wisdom, Understanding and Truth. He illuminated the human intellect who turned to him. Augustine attributed to the Holy Spirit—the love between God the Father and the Son—divine Love, expressed in the following powerful statements. ‘So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit, through him the charity of God is poured out into our hearts and through it the whole triad (LZ: *memoria-intellegentia-amor*, the best *imago Trinitatis*) dwells in us.’ (xv.18.32) and ‘The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. (Rom. 5:5)’ (xv.19.37). Augustine’s objective in this context was to explain the triads in the inner man in which love and knowledge were the key elements and reflected in some way the mind, knowledge and love of God. Thus he established that the origin of love and knowledge in the *imago Trinitatis* derived from the Holy Trinity. In Augustine’s epistemology, the element love was the driving force behind self-knowledge, acquiring truth and wisdom because it bound the mind to truth. One’s love for God was indispensable for knowing God, yet God as Trinity remained incomprehensible, a mystery. Augustine asserted that the mind was capable of coming to a certain conception of the Holy Trinity by loving this mystery.¹⁶⁵

3.9.5 *Amor* in the Image of the Trinity (Books VIII–X)

To demonstrate that the Holy Trinity can be reflected in the human spirit, Augustine comments: ‘... as a matter of fact, you do see the Trinity, if you see love.’ (McKenna). Augustine sets out to illustrate this with a triad *amans-quod amatur-amor*:¹⁶⁶ he who loves (as subject), that what (or whom) he loves (as object), and love itself as the binding factor between the first two. As such, this triad reflects the procession of the Holy Trinity.¹⁶⁷

This ‘trinity of love’ is Augustine’s first mental triad and in my view, it serves as a departure point for his further exploration of the trinities which qualify as

¹⁶⁵ These last two assertions are expressed more explicitly in other works. We could deduce the same from *Trin.* VI.10.12; XV.14.24, 27.49–50 and 28.51. God remains inaccessible even by love in the same way he is ultimately inaccessible by knowledge (*Ep. Johannes ad Parthom* 6.2, 6.3, 4.9, 8.6, 8.8). As such, the *via negativa* makes up a part of the *via amoris*. See van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 101–106, 170–171.

¹⁶⁶ Plotinus mentions this triad in *Enn.* VI.8.15; also that Ἐρως is an intermediary between the lover and the beloved (VI.7.33.24–30). He also asserts that longings conceive thinking (V.6.5).

¹⁶⁷ VIII.8.12 and 10.14, in the quote above.

'images of the Holy Trinity'. Brachtendorf speculates that Augustine's introduction of this triad was not intended for consideration as an analogy of the divine Trinity, but for reducing it later—in book IX—to a dyad in the special case of self-love, in which subject and object are one. Brachtendorf's interpretation as such undermines the importance of this triad. Augustine's initial triad of love occurring in the intellect forms indeed the basis of his subsequent triads, as it perfectly coincides with the procession of the Holy Trinity. The fact that it is the first triad Augustine treats, demonstrates Augustine's anchoring of love throughout his whole elaboration of the doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, elevating it to the most important element. Without a conscious love or desire for knowledge, knowledge in mankind would not progress.

C. Tornau also provides an explanation for why Augustine cut off his development of the triad of love in *Trin.* VIII and proceeded to the triad *mens-notitia-amor* in *Trin.* X. This was due to Augustine's awareness of the same triad in Plotinus, *Enn.* VI.8.15.1, concerning the all-unifying love in the One. As such, Tornau explains, Augustine wished to avoid dealing with the philosophical consequences of positing a self-referencing, transcendent love. However this view cannot be correct. Because investigating deeper into Augustine's doctrine of the divine Trinity will reveal that Augustine did indeed posit the Holy Trinity as a self-referencing (*Trin.* XV.14.23). The self-referencing here occurs in the context of memory and knowledge shared by the Father and the Son. By virtue of Augustine's insistence on the equality of the three divine Persons (XV.17.28, etc.), it is safe to assume that these statements on self-referencing would equally apply to the Holy Spirit and thus the element love, hence enabling us to assume a transcendent Trinity of Love. Moreover, the third element in Augustine's triad above could likewise be regarded as transcendent divine love, which is mentioned in his treatment of another triad below.¹⁶⁸

Augustine then ponders, what do we know about true love anyway? (VIII.7.10, 8–12) His answer seems simple: love entails everything that one loves. Yet what he means is, is that semantically one cannot love or know love unless one is involved in the act of loving. Love must have an object in order to be what it is. Thus the meaning of the term love encompasses in itself a dynamic movement which expands from the one who loves to another and is perpetuated further. Augustine then makes a statement which has provoked much discussion: one's love for another is exactly the same as loving God because God is the source of all love (VIII.8.12).¹⁶⁹ Subsequently Augustine invents a

168 Brachtendorf (*Struktur*, 126); See also my analysis in e.g., Chapter 8.3.2. C. Tornau, 'Eros versus Agape', 288–299.

169 See Teske, 'Love of Neighbor in Augustine'; R. Canning, *Unity of Love*. Augustine expresses

new triad: I, as the lover, my neighbor as the other, and God. In both triads, God or love itself is the binding or unifying principle. Note that this is the beginning of his reflections of the two first commandments to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself. This theme is elaborated in various contexts in *Trin.* and is thus one of his key doctrinal aspects of love. What we love in others is their good and just character. The reason why one loves something or someone is because the good trait of that person complies with the highest norm, the Idea, such as in 'You only love what is good.'¹⁷⁰ How we ourselves become good and just, is by contemplating and loving the Forms. Likewise, one loves the person whom one believes to be just, because this person loves the Form Justice by having perceived and understood it himself (VIII.6.9). Truly loving someone means loving this person's spirit (VIII.10.14).¹⁷¹ This is another statement which has provoked animosity in some readers, as if he intended here to devalue love directed to the human body.¹⁷² However in other treatises, he explicitly exhorts to love one's neighbor by caring for and respecting the bodies of others.¹⁷³ It is undeniable that Augustine's vision of ideal love was chaste friendship.

As a follow up to this conviction, he sets out to provide a definition of the element love on the human level.¹⁷⁴ By recognizing that love is a kind of 'life', he is referring to the being, essence or substance, which love, as well as knowledge, constitute. He then proceeds to explain how love, in desiring self-knowledge, leads to acquiring knowledge and then connects the mind to its own self-understanding. In doing so, Augustine constructs (in his opinion), a

in other works that love for God is the first in the order of commandments but love for people nearby is the first in the order in the carrying that commandment out. Loving others is enough because this love encompasses love for God and is a gift from God. Yet in *Trin.*, Augustine stresses the necessity and importance that a person love God first before all others, which will in turn effectuate the proper love of others (e.g.: *Sermo* 1); van Bavel, *Drie-Eenheid*, 459; *ibidem*, 'Love'; *ibidem*, 'The Double Face of Love, The Daring Inversion: Love Is God', in: *Studia Ephemeridis "Augustinianum"* 26 (Rome, 1987) 81–102.

170 VIII.3.4. In VIII.9.13, he uses the example of Paul as a servant of God and how our visualization of such is in compliance with the ideal Form 'Servant of God.'

171 This recalls Plotinus, who posits that pure true love is exclusively unphysical as well. Regarding lovers who aim for having children and sexual intercourse, he claims that earthly beauty satisfies them. He means here that those seeking physical love do not recollect the archetypes of Beauty (*Enn.* III.5.1.20–43).

172 Van Bavel discusses the many outraged responses from modern readers in: *Liefde, Vriendschap*, 76.

173 E.g., *Doct. chr.* 1.24.19, 24; *De moribus Manichaeorum* 27.52–53; T.J. van Bavel, "No One Ever Hated Their Own Flesh", Eph. 5:29 in Augustine, *Augustiniana* 1995 (45) 44–93, 55, 62, 71 and 87.

174 *Trin.* VIII.10.14. This echoes Plotinus' notion of "Ἐρως: longings which never stop, desiring to go further than the One (*Enn.* VI.7.22.20).

better trinity in which the element *amor* binds *notitia* with the *mens*. Having introduced in *Trin.* VIII the themes of knowledge and self-knowledge, he now shows how love (and self-love) play an instrumental role in acquiring knowledge of God. Yet he is still looking for adequate answers to his question: how can we love or know God even if he is not fully known to us?¹⁷⁵ He explains that in order to learn anything,¹⁷⁶ one must feel a love or desire for that something which one does not yet fully know (X.1.3).¹⁷⁷ Self-love is instigated by a longing for self-knowledge and vice-versa. In turn, the mind can only know itself if it loves itself. Only by recognizing self-love or love in one's mind, one can know one's mind and then love something else or another person. As we recall, Augustine's reflections on the relationship between the three elements spilled out in all directions. The two elements, knowledge and love formed a special relationship with the mind: they enabled the mind to be reflexive and aware of itself. Love played a role in determining this truth. It involved an inner appreciation or approbation that a particular knowledge was true and conformed to what one knows in one's own mind to be true.¹⁷⁸ It bound knowledge to the mind. Augustine deemed the three elements as substances, but the unity of the three elements formed by this intense collaboration, constitutes one essence and as such images the Holy Trinity (IX.12.18).

3.9.6 Love-Longing-Searching

The conclusion of book IX.12.18 is of interest here because Augustine is associating love with desire (*appetitus*), desire to know (*inquisitio*), will (*voluntas*) and searching (*quaerere*), as binding forces between the mind and knowledge.

What then, are we to say about love (*de amore*)? When the mind loves itself, does it not also seem to have begotten the love of itself? For it was lovable to itself even before it loved itself ... Is it, perhaps, to indicate

¹⁷⁵ I.e., VII.4.6, 5.8 and X.1.1, etc.

¹⁷⁶ Torchia explains the difference between Augustine's love of study (*amor studii*) and inquisitive appetite (*appetitus inveniendi*): 'While the former encompasses a sound devotion to learning that ultimately leads the mind to the contemplation of God and eternal truths, the latter is the hallmark of mind's lower function when given free unregulated rein over our range of affections. ... Augustine acknowledges a fundamental difference between the inquisitive appetite and the mind's natural love for its object of knowledge ... he treats inquisitiveness as the desire to find out and the desire to know as correlative.' (Torchia, *Restless Mind*, 178–179).

¹⁷⁷ See Plotinus on the unconscious soul becoming conscious (*Enn.* VI.7.15–25).

¹⁷⁸ *Trin.* VIII.6.9 and IX.10.15; This recalls Plotinus' mentioning of the approbation or judgment of Good or Truth, the latter of which is the soul's desire and love (*Enn.* VI.7.20–22).

clearly that this is the principle of love from which it proceeds—... but that it is, therefore, not rightly said to be begotten by the mind, as is the knowledge of itself by which it knows itself, because that has already been found through knowledge which is called born or discovered (*inventum*) and is usually preceded by a search inquisition which will come to rest in knowledge as its goal? For inquiry is a desire to find (*nam inquisitio est appetitus inveniendi*) which is the same thing as saying, to discover Further, that desire, which is latent in seeking, proceeds from one who seeks, remains as it were in suspense and only comes to rest in the goal towards which it is directed, when that which is sought has been found and is united with him who seeks. Although this desire (*appetitus*), that is, this seeking (*inquisitio*) does not seem to be love, by which that which is known is loved, for we are still striving to know, yet it is something of the same kind. For it can already be called ‘will’ (*voluntas*) since everyone who seeks wishes to find (*quaerit invenire*); and if what he seeks belongs to the order of knowledge, then everyone who seeks wishes to know (*omnis qui quaerit nosse vult*). And if he wishes ardently and earnestly, he is said to study, a term we generally use for those who pursue and acquire any branch of learning. A kind of desire (*appetitus*), therefore, precedes the birth in the mind and by means of it, that is, by our seeking and finding what we wish to know, an offspring, namely knowledge is born ... and this same desire by which one yearns for the knowing of the thing when known, while it holds and embraces the beloved offspring, that is, knowledge, and unites it to its begetter.

IX.12.18 (Translation: McKenna)

Inquisition (‘searching and finding’), appetite and desire are also what trigger ‘the birth of knowledge’ in the mind. They hold and embrace the offspring, uniting it with the begetter, the *mens*. In this way, they are synonymous with the element love. Longing to know something (*scire cupientium*), Augustine repeats in X.1.2, is not without love for the thing one longs to know. These loves and desires are also driven by the perception of beauty. When something has been learned which is considered worthwhile, it will be retained because one sees the beauty in it as well as its utility. The beauty of the thing is truly known in the eternal principles, which encompass the knowledge of all signs; this is the beauty which one truly loves.¹⁷⁹ Hence, longing for knowledge and longing for beauty are essentially the same for Augustine.

179 These passages reflect Augustine’s familiarity with *Enn.* v.8. *On Intelligible Beauty* and v.3.5: dealing with desiring transcendent beauty and knowledge.

A succinct synthesis will be helpful here, in order to connect the aspects of love (desire, searching, etc.) with certain facets of self-knowledge. We will begin when Augustine turned to the question: what is the mind searching for when it is passionately searching to know itself, as long as it is for himself unknown? (x.3.5, 6.8) He explained that our self-knowledge was often false, by having loved unstable material images and attaching ourselves to them. This was also the way in which we are accustomed to thinking that we know God—by imagining God with material images, which was likewise faulty (1.6.11, etc.). One must keep longing for truth and not cease to search because one will indeed eventually find it.¹⁸⁰ In this sense, knowing that one does not know was also a form of self-knowledge (likened to the adage of Socrates). This entailed knowledge of the fact that I am a seeker of self-knowledge and am without a certain knowledge (and this is why I long for it). The intellect had no need to search for itself in order to know itself (x.10.11) because the mind finds itself by merely entering itself, without having first to wade through external, visual images.¹⁸¹ Augustine was referring here to the higher form of self-knowledge *se nosse* which pertained to the intellect-image of God. In this sense, *se nosse* constituted a *verbum*, in which self-love approbated this to be true and held it fast.

Hence, Augustine's doctrine of love stresses that longing to know will ultimately lead to truth: of oneself and of God. It will lead to gazing at the Ideas and embracing the truth, which occurs as an immediate intuition (*visio intellectualis*). One loves God by loving the Ideas (in this sense also 'Ideals'). Loving in this manner is always active, always searching, always desiring to fathom more of the incomprehensibility of God. As such, love and desire elevate one's consciousness from an individual *verbum*, to the universality of knowledge and to divine Truth, Wisdom and Love of Christ, the *Verbum Dei*. Augustine's view on the personal development of self-knowledge and knowledge of God in their relation to loving, desiring and searching for truth can be summarized in the potent quote below. Here we can confirm the primacy of love in Augustine's doctrine of intellect.

A trinity is certainly what we are looking for (LZ: in one's mind) and not any kind of trinity but the one that God is, the true and supreme and only God. Wait for it then, whoever you are listening to this, we are still looking and not one can fairly find fault with someone who is looking for such

180 I.e., 1x.1.1; xv.2.2 and 28.51.

181 He compares this to true love which cannot be true if derived from need. An interesting parallel with Plotinus: the notion of Ἔρως is considered non-appetitive (Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, 183, 76–86).

things as this, provided that in looking for something so difficult either to know or to express, he remains absolutely firm in faith ... “Look for God”, it says, (Ps. 105:40) “and your souls shall live”; and in case anyone should be too quick to congratulate himself that he has finally gotten there, “look for his face”, it (LZ: the search) goes on, “always”. ... Perfection in this life, he (LZ: Paul in Phil. 3:13) is saying, is nothing but forgetting what lies behind and stretching out to what lies ahead intently.¹⁸²

IX.1.1

3.9.7 Self-Love and Longings: Truth and Delusion

There are longings which ultimately lead to happiness, such as the longing for knowledge of oneself or of God; while other longings lead to despair. Augustine's psychology distinguishes knowledge and love directed towards material existence from the knowledge and love active in the *imago Dei*—that which is oriented to God and is essentially sinless.¹⁸³ The acquisition of self-knowledge or self-love however can have pitfalls. ‘For it (the self) does many things through evil desires as though it had forgotten itself’ (x.5.7). He gives the example of the mind (*imago Dei*) seeing inwardly beautiful things in the elevated nature of God which inspire love. But instead of remaining focused on those things to enjoy them, a person could prefer to attribute those things to himself: to become what God is by his own willpower instead of longing to resemble God through the grace of God (x.5.7).¹⁸⁴ ‘What happens is that the soul, loving its own power, slides away from the whole which is common to all and into the part which is its own private property ... by the apostasy of pride which is called the beginning of all sin, it strives to grab something more than the whole. And to govern by its own laws.’ (xii.9.14).

In this way, self-love can hold a person in delusion. It begins with loving material images in the outer world which only contain truth in so far as they are vestiges or traces of divine truth. A person's thoughts are ordinarily permeated with these images. The force of love for these *phantasiae* and *phantasmata* can be great; in cherishing them and pinning them to the memory with loving care, the mind attributes to them something of its own substance (x.6.8). The false self-image which results, leads to the fundamentally incorrect belief that one's true self is that which is bound to material life (x.7.9).

¹⁸² Plotinus often expressed the importance of forgetting (a multitude of things from this life) in order to remember God, one's true self, one's origin and one's destiny (e.g., *Enn.* iv.3.25, 26.53–57 and 27.21–26).

¹⁸³ See the characteristics of *visio intellectualis* (*Gen. litt.* xii.14.29–30, 25–47) or Chapter 4.4.3.3.

¹⁸⁴ A clear critique of Platonists as in *Conf.* vii.17, 20–26.

Augustine describes another possible pitfall.¹⁸⁵ Material knowledge, not of permanent character, can be lost, forgotten. Realizing this, a person might strive to constrain the potential loss of knowledge, because should this happen, he would think that he would lose all security and think of himself as less. Thus by pursuing worldly knowledge, this person deludes himself into thinking he cannot lose himself. Yet in attaching oneself to the external images, one becomes connected to changeability and instability. This pursuit entails turning away from God; the person becomes less and less even though he assumes that he is becoming more and more (x.5.7).¹⁸⁶ Material images cannot be brought inside the domain of the immaterial nature of the *imago Dei*, because, Augustine argues, they are pollution (x.8.11). Love for worldly knowledge is a love for something foreign to one's true self: alien additions which fog up the view of true reality.¹⁸⁷ A true self-image is created by identifying ourselves with the truth—the higher *verba*—which pertain to the domain of the intellect. These statements can be compared rather neatly to Plotinus' statement on the Νοῦς, whose domain contains no discursive thought (for example in *Enn.* iv.4.1.15), thus no external, transient or mutable images, as they cannot concur with the perfect unity of the Intellect, its union with itself (its self-knowledge) and its pure immaterial intelligibility. The image-intellect actualizes itself by imitating the divine Νοῦς. In both Augustine and Plotinus, understanding true reality augments one's comprehension of oneself and the world in which one lives. Pursuing worldly knowledge is in itself relatively unproblematic as long as one keeps one's origin and destiny in mind. Augustine stresses however that one's self-love must have limitations. For the element self-knowledge, Augustine applied a shift of focus: from self-knowledge to universal knowledge of all humanity. He attributed a shift to love as well: in contemplating God, one's self-love becomes automatically 'our' love—love for one another, loving one's neighbor.

185 See Canning for a more expansive treatment of Augustine's view on the pitfalls of self-love (*Love for God*, 116–141); The interpretation of Augustine's statement 'The more we love God the more we love ourselves.' (*Trin.* xii.16) has been the topic of debate. Canning deals with the views of O'Donovan, Nygren and Burnaby, 121–122; See also Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 116–126; O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven, 1980).

186 This recalls Plotinus: *Enn.* iv.3.27.12. Here he describes how souls gravitate towards physical embodiment, entranced by the possibilities for actualization of their powers. See Torchia, *Restless Mind*, 182.

187 Recalls Plotinus (*Enn.* iv.3.27).

3.9.8 Love, Longings and Prayer as Related to the Doctrine of the *Imago Trinitatis*

Prayer makes up an important element in Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* as exemplified by the prayer at the conclusion of *Trin.* (xv.28.51). This 'Prayer to the Holy Trinity'¹⁸⁸ is literally Augustine's final words in the work and forms a stark contrast to the highly analytical and dogmatic character in the rest of *Trin.* He is addressing God directly here, as he does in *Conf.*, a work which can be regarded as one long, extended prayer.¹⁸⁹

Augustine's teaching on prayer in his other works is anchored in the themes of longing for and the love of God.¹⁹⁰ Longings are expressed and ultimately fulfilled by praying and turning to the source of all love. Thus the core message of Augustine's mystagogy of prayer is that prayer is an act of desire¹⁹¹ as well as an act of love.¹⁹² Augustine's assertions here can easily be applied to his doctrine of love in *Trin.*: such as, that prayer is a means of connecting the lover with the beloved, the lover of wisdom or truth to the source of love and truth. In this sense, longing and prayer are one and the same, 'longing is always praying'.¹⁹³ Prayer can also include 'sacred longings', such as Augustine's longings we have encountered in *Trin.*: to comprehend the Holy Trinity,¹⁹⁴ for the perfection of one's imaging of it, to be liberated from life's falsehoods, for the blessed vision of God, for the union of love with God, etc. In the 'Prayer to the Trinity', Augustine pleads to God to keep him always searching and desiring God. The continuous 'finding of God' has to do with the increasing awareness of the Lord's love and presence, which augments one's self-knowledge and renews one's image. Prayer, which intensifies longing and loving, forms as such a bridge between this temporal, broken life and the beatitude of the afterlife.

188 See Zwollo, 'Prayer'. I have been unable to locate literature dealing specifically with this prayer and treating its meaning. Exceptions are: Schindler, *Wort und Analogie*, 244–245; van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 153–155; yet these consist of only brief comments.

189 It is also the only complete prayer in *Trin.* There are other prayers here (e.g., IV.1.1 and V.1.1) yet these are mainly short and fleeting.

190 *En. Ps.* 39.14; I. Bochet, *Désir Dieu*, 143–165, 462; van Bavel, *The Longing of the Heart*, 45–58; *ibidem*, 'Love', 509–516.

191 *Epistula* 130. In this lengthy correspondence addressed to Proba, Augustine explains how one ought to pray and distinctly connects praying with desiring. He encourages Proba to pray and desire without ceasing (130.9.8 and 10.19).

192 *Conf.* V.1.1; Van Bavel, *Longing Heart*, 73; P.J.J. van Geest, 'Transformation in Order and Desire. Thomas a Kempis' Indebtedness to St. Augustine', in: *Religious Identity and the Problem of Historical Foundation* (Leiden, 2004) 438–456.

193 *Desiderium orat semper. En. Ps.* 37, 14; *Sermo* 80.7.

194 *Trin.* IV.21.31.

In expressing these desires at the end of *Trin.*, he fuses his doctrine of prayer with the consciousness associated with the *imago Trinitatis*: a state of mind above ordinary consciousness (*se nosse, ratio superior* and *sapientia*), directed to God above it in compliance with his condition of the ultimately correct object of the gaze.¹⁹⁵ In this sense we can say that Augustine's 'Prayer to the Holy Trinity' is a demonstration of the soul's proper focus. Augustine's notion of the trinitarian intellect can be aligned to this prayer or generally to Augustine's doctrine of prayer (from his other works) in a number of other ways, and especially considered from the perspective of contemplation and obtaining knowledge. Before responding to a difficult inquiry in *Gen. litt* and *Trin.*, he prayed briefly to God that he may be shown how to understand.¹⁹⁶ Augustine seems to intend that praying is a means to expand the temporal understanding of the finite human mind and deepen one's conception of God. It is an activity which creates an opening or receptivity in one's mind for the invisible, the immutable, the eternal and immortal.¹⁹⁷ Turning to God in prayer is essentially a *conversio*, as he explained in his interpretation of Gen. 1:26 in *Gen. litt* III.20.30. Conversion involved the effective and ideal functioning of the human will, directing its gaze and desire upwards. The multifarious images from the exterior world, which are ever present in our thoughts, serve as a distraction to intellectual contemplation and communion with God. Prayer is thus a temporal means to approach the purity, singularity and unity which characterizes God as a Trinity. By inference we can assume that for Augustine, contemplative prayer involves an intellectual vision of some degree. The intellect, striving to attain the best state of consciousness, is motivated by loving, searching and longing for what one truly loves, and therefore finds fulfillment in this life by praying.

3.9.9 Synthesis: Augustine's Doctrine of Love in *De Trinitate*

Regarding the subject of self-love, O'Donovan summarizes the general differences between love and will in Augustine's conception of self-love in the following way: psychological self-love is the operation of the will in holding the concept of self before the self-perceiving mind. It is not the occupation of the will with its ultimate term, it therefore has nothing to do with the teleological thrust of the will towards beatitude.¹⁹⁸ O'Donovan's first claim is true. In the

195 See Zwollo, 'Prayer', 297–300.

196 *Trin.* VIII.1.1–2; IV.1.1 and IV.21.31. He began his exegesis of Genesis in this way as well in *Conf.* XI.1–9.

197 *Trin.* XV.28.51 in the prayer itself; VIII.1.1–2; *Ep.* 130.

198 O'Donovan, *Self-Love*, 90–91.

second, he misses the point in *Trin.* Will and self-love are not as separate as Donovan is making them to be here, particularly concerning the teleological thrust towards beatitude. *Voluntas*, in the collaboration of the element knowledge (*notitia, intellegentia*) in the *imago Trinitatis*, is not a separate faculty of the mind. It coincides with love and desire in conscious willingness and purposefulness, in the simple wanting of something and focusing on it. The thrust of human desire itself will eventually spur the soul onward to the love of its origin. O'Donovan summarizes Augustine's view further: 'Self-love is articulated in two kinds: the self-love of the *imago deformata* and the self-love of the trinity of contemplation. The role of faith in marking and bridging the chasm between the natural and the perfect has its implications for every activity of the mind and so the mind's self-love too, must be seen as natural on the one hand, perfected on the other and the two aspects are not to be confused.'

O'Donovan is correct in his differentiation of kinds of self-love; the lower one embraces the exterior world in some way, the higher takes place in the activity of contemplation pertaining to the *imago Trinitatis*. However, O'Donovan's claim that 'the two aspects are not to be confused' is not entirely accurate. Once again, his differentiation is too pronounced and inapplicable to Augustine's treatment in *Trin.* There, both forms of self-love can indeed be differentiated, in a similar way as Augustine differentiated two kinds of self-knowledge, the various kinds of *verba* and two kinds of wisdom: *scientia* and *sapientia*. Yet the two forms of self-love are closely connected in Augustine's thinking. In his examples of the pitfalls of self-love, he accounts for natural human mental activities. He shows that these are in the long run generally instable. However it is only when self-love goes overboard that it becomes unnatural and sinful: hazardous to oneself or to others; for instance, in self-aggrandizement and amassing unduly power and status. The perfection of self-love is realized by personal development, starting from one's natural egotistic tendencies, gradually reducing the hazards and moving towards justice, altruistic charity and a progressive assimilation of the perfect love for God. This kind of self-love finds its expression in love for others. Furthermore, the good, healthy functioning will pertains to the domain of the *imago Dei*, in which a person assents to act in the name of the general good and out of love for God.¹⁹⁹ Christ's grace, Augustine emphasizes, is necessary to heal the weaknesses of the will and egoism in order to change its orientation. Considering Augustine's view of the life-long formation of humans in *Gen. litt.* III.20-30-31 to the state of perfection of the angels—which he reit-

199 *Trin.* XII.9.14.–10.15.–11.16; van Bavel, *Vriendschap*, 79; This also recalls the universality of Plotinus' human *νοῦς* as a 'we' instead of an 'I' (throughout the *Enneads*, see also Chapter 3.3).

erates in *Trin.*—, we could then infer that he means that one assimilates the traits of the good will, endowed by God, which will then become ‘natural’ and eventually perfected. Hence, a human being possesses both Donovan’s types of natural and perfected self-love at the same time, each individual in various gradations. In this life, the will is never completely healed in one final flash.

Augustine considered the desire for what one loves and love itself as extensions of one another. Desire was essentially longing for something which is absent; and love, he defined, as a ‘life’ which united two things or desired to unite them, as in the lover with the beloved. Human love and longings were gifts from God.²⁰⁰ These two activities of the human psyche represented for Augustine the most important forces behind all human activity²⁰¹ as well as the compelling force behind all spiritual development and fulfillment.²⁰² Love played a large role in Augustine’s epistemology, in the search and desire for knowledge which one did not yet possess. Whether it was material knowledge or true knowledge, it was love which gave its assent to truth. Yet love for truth could not rest at worldly knowledge. In Augustine’s doctrine, one’s ability to grasp itself or God in a discursive manner was limited. In order to compensate for the lack of conscious concrete knowledge, Augustine saw the necessity to include the element of faith in his epistemology. He considered this as a kind of *scientia* which would be replaced by *sapientia* in the intellectual vision or the *imago Trinitatis*. Augustine often quoted Paul’s words in *Trin.* that without love, your talents, your faith and your knowledge was nothing.²⁰³ From this we can assume that Augustine too believed that without love there would be no (self-) knowledge, no awareness thus no upward progression towards God. Contemplating and praying were excellent means to lift one’s focus to God, but the activity of love and desire were more effective because they operated faster than discursive thinking and also coincided with the immediate, intuitive grasp of truth, characteristic of intellectual vision. The soul, in intellectual vision, desired God and loved his wisdom. The intellect inherently desired immutable, divine knowledge from its Creator which would ultimately renew and complete its resemblance to Him. We can deduce here that in Augustine’s view, love became most actualized at the actualization of one’s intellect. In intellectual

200 *Trin.* VIII.10.14, XV.26.45.

201 *Trin.* XII.14.22.

202 See van Geest, *Incomprehensibility*, 171–174. Van Geest explains that these conclusions brought Augustine to assert the possibility of developing a love for someone who could not be seen, to whose image humans were created. This love was the most important subject of reflection as regards knowing the Holy Trinity. When a person loved this subject, then the highest form of knowledge would be reached.

203 *Trin.* XV.18.32 or 19.37; 1 Cor. 13:1–3.

vision, the cycle of love was complete. Radiating from God through the creation act, sent down to human existence by the Holy Spirit and the Son, then through the conscious activity of human beings' expanding love and cultivation of contemplation, prayer and intellectual vision, love returned back to God. In this way, the second and third Trinitarian entities designated as divine Wisdom and Love were dynamically and eternally present in the human image-intellect.

4 Augustine's Account of the Ascent in *De Trinitate*

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4.4, we acknowledged that the ascent to God in light of Augustine's depiction in *Gen. litt.* was an automatic factor incorporated into Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* and intellect. As a whole, his doctrine consisted of the development of one's intellect, an orientation to God, a progressive approaching and assimilation of divine knowledge in order to increase one's resemblance to God. It entailed as well intellectual vision, a certain kind of vision of God. Let us now briefly review a few of Augustine's general statements on the ascent thus far in this study. In *Gen. litt.* and *Conf.*, he emphasized the difficulties of keeping focused on the divine and illustrated the problem of the soul being weighed down by material concerns. The defective will was one of the problems he stressed in *Conf.* which required healing by Christ and his grace, in order to remain focused on God. The cause of the weak will was original sin, the effects of which he also explained in *Gen. litt.* in his exegesis of the story of Adam and Eve.

In *Gen. litt.*, Augustine depicted an epistemological elevation of the mind which he expounded through his theory of three visions: *visio intellectualis* being the highest, superior to *visio spiritualis*-intramental images, which in turn was superior to *visio corporalis*-sense perception. His conception of intellectual vision served to delineate the characteristics of the image-intellect and its natural propensity for contemplation for what is above it: the Ideas in the Creator, the *Verbum Dei*. Intellectual vision was basically a higher consciousness than ordinary, daily consciousness; an immediate and intuitive grasp of universal truth, infallible and thus sinless. It also entailed the good functioning of the will.

Compared to his accounts of the ascent in *Gen. litt.* and *Conf.*,²⁰⁴ Augustine's account of the ascent to God in *Trin.* runs basically along the same lines.

²⁰⁴ As examined in Chapter 2.1.10: in i.e., *Conf.* VII.10.16–12.18; and in Chapter 4.4.2: e.g., *De Ideis*, *Gen. litt.* XII.26.54.

It is more thorough and the step-by-step process is analyzed more carefully. Many new elements are added, most importantly, the element love, as well as faith and the development of the intellect-image through spiritual exercises and prayer. He augments as well his list of aspects in human life which block the ascent to God. For example, his emphasis on Paul's statements in 1 Cor.13:12, that in this life we can only perceive God through a dark mirror and enigmas; another example concerns the effects of improper desires and love. *Trin.* VIII–X illustrate an ascent in self-knowledge and love; books XI–XIII highlight the specific details of an epistemology, from the experience of sense perception to the increasingly immaterial world of the rational soul and intellect and then to the divine Trinity. As F. van Fleteren correctly points out, it is highly likely that Augustine intended *Trin.* to explicate more fully his own experiences of God and to give a more complete response to the question: to what degree can a human mind know God in this life?²⁰⁵

In *Trin.*, Augustine expresses the ascent in optimistic terms of uniting with God, as well as in negative ones similar to those mentioned above in *Conf.* VII and IX. Many researchers, especially of *Conf.* and *Trin.*, assert that Augustine portrays his Platonist ascents as a 'failure'.²⁰⁶ This is peculiar because Augustine does not use the term failure anywhere. He indeed highlights the difficulties of the ascent in *Conf.* and he repeats these with verve in *Trin.* Augustine expounds that no one is able to remain focused on God as a result of Adam's original sin. Yet alongside this, he also posits that this sin can be alleviated in a gradual process by turning to the second Adam, Christ, who heals the infirmities of the soul in order to facilitate intellectual vision and the glimpse of God. Augustine shows in *Trin.* that it is the destiny of a every Christian to rise above sin and the ways of the world which we inherited, but we cannot do this without Christ's

205 Van Fleteren's insightful remarks on *Trin.* are helpful here: 'Augustine's purpose in writing *The Trinity* is to ascertain what knowledge of God that man can have in this life. In 394 or thereabouts, Augustine finally disavowed his earlier notion that the human mind could attain a full knowledge of and vision of God in this life ... He was still left with the question: To what degree can the human mind know God in this life? In my opinion, Augustine began to write the *Trinitate* as his final answer to that question, which had vexed him since his reading of the Neoplatonists in 386. It is even possible that Augustine's review of these experiences of the divine in writing the *Conf.* prompted him to begin with the writing the *Trinitate*.' ('Mysticism in *The Confessiones*', 318–319).

206 Cavadini, 'Structure, Intention'; J.P. Kenny, 'Faith and Reason', *CCA* (2014) 275–291, 290; Ayres, 'Triune life'; Brachtendorf, *Struktur*. In 'Christological Context', Ayres nuances Cavadini's bolder statements on the 'failure' and in doing so, he nuances his own assertions as well (117–121); also in: 'The Discipline of Self-Knowledge' (269, note 26). Lagouanère argues against du Roy's claim that Augustine's methodical analogy in *Trin.* is an *echec* (*Intériorité*, 503); O. du Roy, *Intelligence de la foi*.

grace. Therefore, while reading the passages on the difficulties of the soul, one must keep in mind the many passages elsewhere in which he affirmatively states the possibility of uniting with God. An interesting note of comparison here: as mentioned in Chapter 3.3, in Plotinus' doctrine of the human intellect, its divinity is so emphasized that other facets of his doctrine explicating the difficulties of the soul which prevent union with the divine,—which are sometimes explained in other treatises—, can be overlooked. As I argued in that chapter, it is important that researchers take account of both aspects of his doctrine. The opposite situation prevails in Augustinian literature: many researchers focus on Augustine's pessimistic claims and lose sight of his optimistic ones. Thus the assertion that Augustine deems the ascent to God as a failure does not do justice to the breadth of the church father's thinking.

4.2 *Summaries of the Ascent*

Various aspects of Augustine's accounts of the ascent from *Trin.* will now be reviewed from his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*: of the epistemological ascent and then the ascent seen from the perspective of love. Augustine's position on the intelligibility as well as the incomprehensibility of God will then be highlighted, in order to respond to the question: what is Augustine's stance in *Trin.* as to how far a soul can unite with God? This will involve a synthesis of earlier treated material in this section, including details from his eschatology.

4.3 *Imago Trinitatis as Reflection of the Holy Trinity*

In book XV, Augustine summarizes his treatment of the *imago Trinitatis* and the trinities in inner man from books VIII–X and relates them to the question as to how far the imaging of God the Trinity was possible in this life.

As far as we could, we have also used the creation which God made to remind those who ask for reasons in such matters that as far as they can, they should decry his invisible things by understanding them through the things that are made, and especially through the rational or intellectual creature which is made to the image of God (*et maxime per rationalem vel intellectualem creaturam, quae facta est ad imaginem Dei*); so that through this, as a kind of mirror, as far as they can and if they can, they might perceive in our memory, understanding and will that God is a trinity. Anyone who has a lively intuition of these three (as divinely established in the nature of his mind) and of how great a thing it is that his mind has that by which even the eternal and unchanging nature can be recalled, beheld and desired—it is recalled by memory, beheld by intelligence (*intuetur per intelligentiam*), embraced by love—has thereby found the image of

that supreme trinity, in order to recollect it, see it and enjoy it, he should refer to every ounce and particle of his life. But I have sufficiently warned him, so it seems to me, that this image made by the trinity and altered for worse by its own fault, is not so to be compared to the trinity that it is reckoned similar in every respect. Rather he should note how great the dissimilarity is in whatever the similarity there may be.

XV.20.39

Augustine established in books VIII–X that God could be perceived to some degree in his creatures, in particular, the rational mind which was an image of God. The image of God was searched for in one's soul. There, two elements, knowledge and love, could be perceived as collaborating in unity, forming a trinity: the mind (its self-awareness), its knowledge and its love (= *mens, notitia, amor*). To sharpen his definition of this higher consciousness, he refined the terminology to the trinity of: 'remembering-understanding-loving' (*memoria-intellegentia-amor/voluntas*) (*Trin.* IX–X). This intellectual trinity, in the first place, reflected upon itself, its own mind and subsequently brought forth knowledge-self-knowledge (as in 'understanding oneself'). Knowledge was bound to the mind through the third element, love—as in loving oneself and loving (or approving of) one's knowledge of oneself.

In the passage above, Augustine points out that we should be able to see the reflection of the Holy Trinity in this human mental trinity in our minds, as if the mind were a mirror and the reflection displayed the procession of the three divine Persons: God the Father brings forth God the Son; their mutual love produces the Holy Spirit. Corresponding to this procession, the human mind brought forth a certain knowledge (*verbum*) which was bound to itself by its own love.

Those persons searching for trinities in themselves were afforded a certain sight: 'as far as they can and if they can, ... a lively intuition': an intellectual vision which enabled the soul to enjoy and delight in God. The seeker will be amazed at 'how great a thing it is that ... the eternal and unchanging nature can be recalled by memory, beheld by intelligence, embraced by love' through the sight of the image of God, which would 'refer to every ounce and particle of his life.' The similarity of the *imago Trinitatis* to the Holy Trinity involves, besides the recognition of the imagery of the procession, its immateriality as well.

'But I have sufficiently warned him ...' Augustine repeats, that in spite of the similarity of the image of God with God, one must never deny its dissimilarity. 'Rather he should note how great the dissimilarity is in whatever the similarity there may be.' In other words, the human reflection of the Trinity was not unchangeable and can become deformed by the soul's own doings. Due to its

imperfection and inferiority to that what it imaged, the best triad of the image of God was no more than a mere analogy to the Holy Trinitarian procession.

In reference to the 'dissimilarity' in the quote above, there is yet another analogy further up in book xv which expresses the relationship between the human and the Holy Trinity more accurately, illustrated in xv.23.43. Here he shows that the element human mind (*mens*) reflects God the Father when the latter is portrayed as 'Divine Memory, Mind or Self-Consciousness'; self-knowledge reflects God the Son in his designation as ultimate 'Knowledge, Wisdom, Truth or Understanding'; and self-love reflects the Holy Spirit as 'Divine Love or Will'. Augustine distinguished here between the human trinity and the Holy Trinity that these terms or characteristics, when applied to the three divine Persons, all apply to them equally. In other words, there is no separation between mind/memory, knowledge/understanding and love/will in the Godhead because the Holy Trinity consists of a perfect unity. In the human image on the other hand, these elements functioned together but disproportionately and separately, thus not in the same perfect symmetry as the Godhead.²⁰⁷ The cause of this unbalanced operating of the human trinity has to do with, among other things, the temporal and transient character of the existence of the human mind which is at a natural discrepancy with the divine, immutable and eternal. The human propensity for sin and turning away from God are of influence here as well. Augustine also emphasizes in this paragraph the sheer magnitude of the Holy Trinity in its knowledge and love which far surpasses the capacity of human knowledge and love.

Augustine stresses here as well that this construction is merely an analogy in order for humans to begin to fathom the Holy Trinity. This 'mirror' through which we see the Trinity is still dark and full of riddles. Thus the intellect can contemplate in itself a number of immaterial triads which may resemble the Trinitarian Godhead, but it cannot yet see God as He truly is. On account of His incomprehensibility, Augustine instructs of the necessity of faith: to first believe in order to comprehend. He reminds that in this life we have the certitude of faith; in the next life, the certitude of knowledge.²⁰⁸

4.4 *Epistemological Ascent*

The trinities concerning one's gaze of the material world by sense perception did not qualify as images of God, as they pertained to the outer man and were of material nature (*Trin.* xi). Yet in describing the trinities in the rational soul,

²⁰⁷ xv.17.28, 20.39, 23.43 and 26.47. Augustine shows a number of different ways in which the human trinity reflects or is related to the Holy Trinity. This example is one of many.

²⁰⁸ E.g., *Trin.* xii.14.23.

Augustine differentiated two kinds of self-knowledge: *se cogitare* of the individual historical self, the lower rational soul. *Se nosse* was the perception of the traits of the existential self, which all humans universally share. We concluded in section 3 that *se nosse* could be derived by intellectual vision, which corresponded to the consciousness of the *imago Trinitatis* (*Trin.* VIII–X). In *Trin.* XI–XIII, Augustine expounded two main types of knowledge: *scientia* and *sapientia*; the first relating to knowledge obtained from the world of which the mind retained images; the second, to contemplation, acquiring wisdom by intellectual vision: the consciousness of the *imago Trinitatis*. These terms made up an ascent within the rational soul, from discursive thinking to an intuitive, immediate experience of truth in the upper region of the intellect-image of God. An epistemological ascent was further illustrated by the mind's 'offspring': human *verba* or truth which were apparently intended to be experienced in different degrees; the lowest pertaining to the individual self-knowledge containing exterior material images (*Trin.* VIII–X), and the higher, to the knowledge or self-knowledge obtained while contemplating the Ideas, the highest Truth, the *Verbum Dei* (for example in XV.14.24). Augustine added that a *verbum* could not be expressed in human language (XV.10.19, 11.20). Could Augustine's theory of *verbum* include the supra-rational terrain of incomprehensibility in the illumination of Christ? If that were so, we could add the aspect of ineffability to one of the characteristics in Augustine's theory of intellectual vision.

There was no sign of failure in Augustine's account of the ascent to God; when desiring to know; one could call upon Christ and ask for grace. When the will was working well, it pleaded to Christ through prayer. As to why Augustine devoted so much space to the blockages involved in the ascent, original sin, the broken will and other—in the eyes of some—pessimistic or realistic—aspects, Augustine's reading of Plotinus' doctrine of the intellect can supply us with some answers. It is plausible that after reading the *Enneads*, Augustine deemed it necessary to bring his own thinking about the ascent into more balance; which is to say, he would correct the overly optimistic depiction of the intellect in certain passages of the *Enneads*, in which there were no limitations posed to its access to the κόσμος νοητός.²⁰⁹

To return to the summary of Augustine's epistemology, other elements were present as well: in order to obtain knowledge of God, one must first rely on a strong sense of reliable faith, derived from Scripture; a knowledge which one

209 Treated in Chapter 3.3 and 3.4. This hypothesis will be examined more closely in Chapter 9.5.2 on the ascent, considered in the light of all other aspects of this study.

does not necessarily fathom initially. In addition to this, Augustine advocated activating and exercising the intellect. Obtaining knowledge of God demanded the working of a good functioning will to turn to Christ (*conversio*); Christ continuously healed the will and temporarily released one's mind from the multitude of worldly images or unhealthy attachments which blocked the view of God. In *Trin.*, Augustine fused love with the workings of the will. Desire and love were forces which impelled the soul upwards to her origins. The remainder of Augustine's account of the ascent will be continued from the perspective of love.

4.5 *The Ascent by Love*

Augustine regarded the ascent of love as beginning with the gaze of beauty in material vestiges which inspired love and desire (xv.2.3). Yet he is predominantly preoccupied here with spiritual love arising from the desire to know something, especially something which one does not yet fully know. Having heard of something which has been praised, one's intellectual appetite is stimulated and the desire is awakened to enjoy the beauty of this object or to learn of a certain doctrine (x.1.1, 1.2, etc.). Starting with the inquiry of how we can love something which we do not fully know, Augustine studied the collaboration between the elements love and knowledge in the mind in all its facets.

From sense perception, proceeding inwardly, one encountered intramental material images which the soul could delight in and attach to. Yet loving these images or even the world, from where they derived, would impede a vision of God or a true conception of self. In search of the latter, the soul required God's grace to ascend further to the higher self, the intellect, which was able to contemplate what it loved most in the divine light of Christ and his Ideas. Augustine posited two kinds of self-love: self-love based upon the images was a kind of *imago deformata*. The other was of an enduring character, that of the image of God. Its focus was directed upward to the divine Forms and loved God through his Ideas, Goodness and Justice.

The experience of loving God or loving someone always entailed love for ideal qualities in the eternal Ideas.²¹⁰ Augustine added an attribute to his theory of Ideas: faith in what one has learned of God but which cannot yet be fully understood, stimulated this love for the Forms (*Trin.* viii–ix). Loving God in faith would certainly lead to a clearer conception of God. The more passionate we love God, Augustine stated, the more we see God in the immutable Forms

210 This recalls Plotinus' conception of the *Noûs* as location for the Ideas; that all desires lead to the Good—to the Form of the Good (*Enn.* vi.7.21), God (*Noûs*) is Form (*Enn.* vi.7.28).

of Good and Justice. These were the ideal Forms with which we should strive to live in accordance. Love was then equated with love for the Good, because God was total Good and absolute Love.

Augustine considered the entire Holy Trinity as Love by virtue of its unity of the three Persons, and as such, was the source of all human love; it was the mission of the Holy Spirit to pour love into human hearts. Thanks to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we are able to love others.²¹¹ Enjoying God's love enabled us to love others, as God's love naturally flowed from one human soul to the other. The human *imago Trinitatis* was elevated as it were by Christ and the Holy Spirit to a vision of God—of God as a unity of three divine Persons. In the state of mind of worshipping the Holy Trinity, one experienced one's true self. Augustine used the biblical terms faith, hope and love to describe the ascent. Hope involved the desired blessed vision in the afterlife, the complete face-to-face sight of God. Augustine's view was that human love actualized and realized its greatest potential in the intellect which was always focused on God and desired God.

4.6 *God's Intelligibility and Incomprehensibility*

Earlier in this chapter on Augustine's teaching of the Trinitarian Godhead, his positive and negative theology was discussed. Here Augustine's stance was noted that God was intelligible to the human mind, yet in His magnitude and infinity, incomprehensible. This study illustrated the various ways in which Augustine depicted the human mind responding to these two aspects.

Although God the Trinity was to some extent intelligible, the human mind was unable to plunge itself in the divine substance and simply bask in this realm at his own volition. It could nonetheless grasp with its rational facility certain aspects of the divine without having consciously experienced God in his true Being. A few examples of these aspects were: the understanding of the perfect unity of the Holy Trinity; the ontological characteristics of the divine (immaterial, eternal, immutable and infinite); or that the Holy Trinity was of a magnitude far extending the intellectual grasp of humans. That the soul itself did not possess these kinds of divine characteristics was discernable in human nature and psychology.

God was also intelligible to the human mind through Christ in his two natures. He was in both cases an object of contemplation. In his human nature, we could grasp his perfect Love, Justice and adherence to God the Father, without us fully possessing these characteristics ourselves (VIII.6.9). In particular,

²¹¹ XV.20.39, XV.22.42, etc.

we could identify with Jesus Christ in his moments of greatest adversity, suffering and compassion. As Augustine asserted, they served as model by which to judge one's own behavior; his acts and attitudes for perceiving one's own shortcomings and sins (IV.2.4–3.6). Hence, Christ's physical human life, as well as the Scriptures which portrayed this life, served as an exterior source of intelligible truth. These kinds of knowledge were *scientia*, yet once understood properly, they were internalized and transformed to *sapientia*. It was imperative that this wisdom become internalized by conscious approbation, as in the embracing and cherishing of the truth, as Augustine described in his doctrines of *verbum* and love.

The other nature of Christ, in Augustine's view, the eternal, transcendent Son through whom all things were made, was also to some extent intelligible, as immaterial, invisible, divine Light. Christ remained in this way a 'Form' of contemplation,²¹² similar to Plotinus' second hypostasis, *Noûs*, which was likewise one and the same with the Ideas and oriented to the first Principle in eternal contemplation. The *Verbum Dei*, the eternal divine Christ, was always present in the highest part of the human soul. His illumination was directly accessible through contemplation and prayer and was indeed indispensable, for example, for the soul's transition from *scientia* to *sapientia*, as well as for the *visio intellectualis*, all of which facilitated insight into the divine nature. Thus Augustine depicted Christ at work on many levels in the upward path of the soul. The contact with His Light consisted of a momentary experience of the divine, which thereafter required processing by reflection, committal to memory and exercise so that it can be readily called upon again in a *memoria Dei*.

Augustine further supplemented his assertion of the intelligibility of God in his theory of self-knowledge. Knowing oneself would develop to universal and divine knowledge and become progressively more true. This was realized by purification: removing the obstacles to insights of truth by pursuing the things which the intellect passionately desired, such as eternal, material goods. Augustine's efforts to articulate the intelligibility of God could also be understood in light of his critique of the Platonists, that they knew where the blessed Fatherland was but did not know how to get there (*Conf.* VII.20.26). They did not recognize the Incarnation of Christ, thus were ignorant of the active role he played in the human soul's ascent to God and the example he gave to become humble and a more perfect image of God. Christ would essentially pull the soul up beyond the limitations of ignorance.

²¹² XV.15.25, 16.26.

Yet at the same time the soul would continuously confront the incomprehensibility of God. In *Trin.*, Augustine repeated countless times ‘We see now through a mirror in an enigma’ (1 Cor. 13:12). ‘Now we can indeed take it, that by the use of the words “mirror” and “enigma” the apostle meant any likenesses that are useful for understanding God with, as far as this is possible; but of such likenesses none is more suitable than the one which is not called God’s image for nothing (1.2: *Verbum Dei*). No one therefore should be surprised that in this fashion of seeing which is allowed us in this life, namely through a mirror in an enigma, we have to struggle to see at all.’ (xv.9.16). Therefore, Augustine underscored here that in this life seeing God in a complete way as He truly is, is simply impossible. We can only perceive the Trinity to some degree through Christ (xv.25.45).

Augustine also declared that realizing what one does not know was a significant and profound act of knowing in itself (x.3.5). The role of faith in his epistemology and his motif ‘searching and finding’—unceasingly desiring to know God in his doctrine of love, were examples of Augustine encouraging his readers to persist in pursuing what we presently do not and cannot know of God. The perfect unity of the Holy Trinity represented the highest form of singularity which existed. Thus an ascent to God for Augustine entailed removing oneself more and more from the multiplicity of the exterior world—one’s worldly knowledge—to the unity of God within. Complete unification with the One (Christ—the *Verbum Dei* who was one pure, singular Form), remaining with Him and enjoying him fully was to be anticipated at the resurrection (IV.7.11).²¹³

4.7 *Eschatology and Vision of God*

In *Gen. litt* and especially *Trin.*, Augustine’s references to the afterlife were plentiful and played a major role in his doctrines.²¹⁴ For instance, he described life after bodily death as the return to the celestial fatherland where the soul would enjoy immortal and eternal life.²¹⁵ The resurrection of body and soul in the

213 Van Fleteren explicates Augustine’s view as such: ‘Through Christ, the search of the ancient philosophers is fulfilled. Christ is the means of salvation: the only means of reaching God: the One, the Good, the Beautiful. But Christ as second Person of the Trinity is equivalent to the Neo-Platonist “fatherland”. He is therefore both means and end.’ ‘Ascent of the Soul’, 63.

214 See Chapter 4.3.2.7. *Gen. litt.* IV.23.40, 24.41, 25.42, V.20.38, VI.19.30, 21.30, XII.35.68, 36.69; *Conf.* XII.13.16; *Trin.* throughout, i.e., I.8.15–17; IV.3.6, 7.11, 18.24; XIV.19.25 and 26; XV.23.43, 24.44, 25.45.

215 III.4.9, XIV.19.25–26.

afterlife²¹⁶ coincided with other events: a perfect intellectual vision or *visio Dei* in which divine reality would be perceived face-to-face. 'There we shall see the truth without any difficulty and enjoy it in all its clarity and certitude. There, there will be nothing for us to seek with the reasonings of the mind, but we will perceive by direct contemplation.' (xv.25.45). He also wrote that the Holy Trinity will be seen when the Intermediary Jesus Christ hands over the Kingdom of God to the Father (1.10.20). At that time, human images of God will be cured of all weaknesses by grace, be fully re-created to perfection and become equal to the angels. They will in a sense resemble the Creator, yet will never be truly equal to the Creator on account of their ensuing changeability (xv.23.43). This glorious vision will be their reward for their good faith in this life (1.8.17).

From these statements, we can say that Augustine envisioned a trajectory of personal evolution, a pilgrimage, in which self-knowledge, self-love, participating in God's Love and Wisdom—the key aspects of the Trinitarian intellect—progressively increased in this life and culminated in the afterlife with the attainment of perfect knowledge of God.²¹⁷ This was one of the longings which he expresses in the 'Prayer to the Holy Trinity'. At that time, he asserted, we will desire to do nothing but praise God endlessly (xv.28.51). The following quote exemplifies Augustine's vision of union with God, as invoked by desire and love.

Furthermore it (LZ: the mind) would be unable to love itself if it were altogether ignorant of itself; by which image of God in itself, it is so powerful that it is able to cleave to Him whose image it is. For it has been established in the order of natures, not of places, that no one save He is above it. Finally, when it shall cleave to Him completely, it will be one spirit, and the Apostle bears witness to this when he says 'But he who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit.', by drawing near, of course, in order to partake of that nature, truth and blessedness, but yet without any increase in Him of His Nature, truth and blessedness. In that nature, therefore, to which the mind will blissfully adhere, it will live unchangeably, and all that it sees, it will see as unchangeable. Then as the Divine Scriptures promise, its desire will be satisfied with good things, with unchangeable goods, with the Trin-

216 *Trin.* iv.3.5–6. The apostle Paul on the resurrection and physical/spiritual bodies: 1 Cor. 14:35–15:55. Augustine adds that these bodies will necessarily be of a spiritual or intransient character (e.g., *Trin.* xiv.17.23). In *Civ. Dei*, his speculations on the afterlife are more extensive, e.g., in xxii.29.

217 The passages xiv.17.23, 18–24 and 19–25 describe the gradual development from the outer to inner man, the transformation to the perfect image and the complete vision of God as far as the afterlife and resurrection.

ity itself, its God, whose image it is; and that nothing may ever henceforth injure it, it will be in the secret of His Face, so filled with His abundance that it will never find delight in committing sin. But now when it sees itself it does not see anything unchangeable.

XIV.14.20 (Translation: McKenna)

Note in this passage that Augustine depicts a strong and almost immediate union with the second divine Person by means of desire and love: 'Finally, when it shall cleave to Him completely, it will be one spirit ... to which the mind will blissfully adhere, it will live unchangeably, and all that it sees, it will see as unchangeable.' Such expressions are exceptional in *Trin.* However he is referring to a state in the afterlife, which is indicated by his shifting to the present tense: 'But now when it sees itself it does not see anything unchangeable.'

4.8 *Conclusions on Augustine's Account of the Ascent*

The majority of researchers of *Trin.* agree that Augustine did not consent to the possibility of a true ascent to the Trinity in this life, meaning specifically, an ultimate experience of complete unification of the human soul with the three divine Persons.²¹⁸ Augustine's account of the difference between the *imago Trinitatis* and the *Sancta Trinitas* essentially boiled down to the conclusion, that our rational, temporally oriented minds, distracted as they are by the surplus of intramental material images derived from the exterior world, cannot completely embrace the wholly immaterial, eternal and infinite character of the Holy Trinity. The perception of the trinities in one's own mind will not tell us everything about the divine Trinity, because there is no comparison with the workings of the Holy Trinity and the workings of the human mind, where such a perfect unity is scarce. Accordingly, Augustine recognized the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of imagining the exhilarating experience of the complete *visio Dei* while still in this life.²¹⁹ He persuaded the faithful to persevere in the desire for ultimate fulfillment, strengthening themselves with such activities as contemplation, meditation and prayer. Exercising the intellect and practicing holding one's gaze on God, would also contribute to one's progress of becoming a perfect image of God. Augustine was in complete faith that by longing and searching for the experience of eternity and infinity, one would actually encounter it. His suggested preparations for the ultimate *visio Dei* and

218 I.e., Schindler, *Wort und Analogie*, 227; Ayres, 'Triune life', 75–76; Hill, *Trinity*, 26–27; Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 38, 48–55.

219 xv.25.45. Augustine likely has something in mind as a perfect intellectual vision which he described in *Gen. litt.* xii. See Zwollo, 'Soul's Divine Experience', 85–92.

beatitude, which would increase one's love and understanding, were intended to usher in as much peace and contentment as possible now in this life. It was however not completely clear whether Augustine meant that saintly souls would truly see the Holy Trinity in the afterlife at the resurrection. One would see the Son and through Him, the Trinity. Augustine's distinction between the Creator and the creature in *Trin.* was not so impermeable that a human would not assimilate any divinity in this life. It was evident here that Augustine went to great extremes to provide tools to bridge the enigmatic present vision of God with the fullness of the one in the afterlife.

Augustine additionally prescribed a unity between persons and Christ as their Intermediary, which would take place in this life (*Trin.* iv.9). These passages are related to his exposition on Christ's body as *sacramentum* and *exemplum* (iv.3.5–6): Christ's single death in ratio to,—or in harmony with—the death and resurrection of the human body and soul. Although Augustine explicitly excludes any possibility of consubstantiality between Christ and humans here, in his analogy of Christ's body (the head regarded as Christ himself; his limbs, the universal church or community of Christians), he expressed this unity in considerably positive terms.²²⁰

By examining the two ways in which Augustine depicted the ascent to God—by knowledge and love—it was clear that Augustine regarded love as having the highest priority in his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*. The sheer longing for unification with God was a more effective means to acquire divine knowledge and ascend than through the faculty of discursive thinking. As the church father himself demonstrated at the end of *Trin.*, the ascent to God by love could be attained while in prayer (xv.28.51). Prayer was an act of love or desiring, in which the broken human will, damaged by original sin committed by Adam and Eve, operated the most efficaciously: by orienting itself to God.

220 See L. Zwollo, 'Augustine's Conception of Sacrament: The Death and Resurrection of Christ as Sacrament in *De Trinitate*: Mystic Union between Christ and his Church', in: L. Westra, L. Zwollo (eds.) *Proceedings of the conference Sakramentsgemeinschaft in der frühen Kirche*, January 2–5, 2017 (LAHR, Leuven) forthcoming.

Prologue to Chapters 6–9 on Augustine and Plotinus

The upcoming chapters of this monograph involve comparisons of the most important aspects of the doctrines of Augustine and Plotinus. They will tie together the main points of Plotinus' cosmology, the image of God and the ascent to God (from Chapter 3) with those in Augustine's doctrines of creation and image of God (from Chapters 4 and 5), while keeping in mind many elements of Augustine's appraisal of Platonism (from Chapter 2). A great deal of this material will enable us to approach the first inquiry of this study: how did Augustine utilize the elements of Plotinus' philosophy? Why did Augustine find those Plotinian elements attractive in order to substantiate his doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*? Which elements did he reject and why?

In Chapters 2–5, a number of major similarities between the two thinkers were already pointed out, such as in the sections 'Synthesis' at the close of these expositions. Chapter 4 also dealt with many correspondences in their cosmologies. Yet now we will focus on specific areas most relevant to the inquiries of this study, such as their conceptions of the Godhead (in Chapter 6); their notions of imaging, the human intellect as image of God and their epistemologies (in Chapter 7); their doctrines of love—Plotinus: ἔρως, Augustine: *amor* (in Chapter 8); and then their depictions of the ascent (Chapter 9). These chapters will begin by discussing the similarities and conclude with establishing the most significant differences. Because of the unexpected overload of similarities between the two thinkers, these analyses will concentrate more on articulating the differences. Chapter 10 will collect all the major results in a synthesis to form the conclusions.

More than a half a century ago, the question as to who the Platonist author was that Augustine had claimed to have read in *Conf.* VII.9.13 was still in the heat of debate. Augustinian research demanded that correspondences found between Augustine and Platonist sources be substantiated with text comparisons and readily identifiable common terminology. A good example of this is Solignac's article from 1962.¹ Yet with time, the drawbacks to adhering strictly to this method were recognized, due to—at the very least—the practical difficulties it imposes upon the author of a publication with space limitation. It is almost impossible to find *brief* passages from the *Enneads* which match up

1 A. Solignac, 'Ce que Augustin dit avoir lu de Plotin', *BA* 13, 682–689.

in a convincing way to *brief* passages in *Gen. litt* or *Trin*. Also, we often see in Augustine's writing references to aspects in Plotinus' philosophy expressed in different ways. Such a phenomenon demands explanation and sometimes of concepts in a context which are not immediately relevant. The other way around is also certainly true. A passage from the *Enn.* might expose a multitude of ideas which Augustine made use of, while the remainder of the content does not provide a perfect match. J. Rist aptly describes the woes of a researcher in attempting to provide literary evidence from the *Enneads* for proving Augustine's indebtedness to Plotinus.

Augustine's reading of Plotinus was not that of a scholar but that of a determined seeker for the way to a good life based on truth. Hence a hunt for verbal parallels between his texts and that of Plotinus cannot do justice to the impact that *The Enneads* had upon him. Certainly such parallels can be found but modern scholars have become bogged down in the details of which exactly were the few of the treatises of Plotinus Augustine had actually read at the time of his conversion and the debate is endless and no objective means is available to settle it.²

For these reasons, this study will not commit itself to text comparisons. Instead it will strive to illustrate similar concepts in both doctrines with the most concise passages. The irony of this chosen strategy is that several texts were incidentally discovered which do correspond closely in an uncanny way.

² J. Rist, 'Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', *CCP* (1996) 386–414, 405–406.

Augustine and Plotinus on the Godhead

1 Introduction

Admittedly, an examination of the notion Godhead of both thinkers does not pertain to the main inquiries of this study. Nonetheless there are some relevant observations to be made from the material in this study thus far, concerning the models which the human images imitate and reflect, and concerning the alleged influence of Plotinus on Augustine's doctrine of the Holy Trinity. These are of direct consequence for the upcoming analyses of the image of God and the ascent in Chapters 7 and 9. Another reason for including the aspect of Godhead in the final analysis is that this comparison often leads to different conclusions than are normally stated in scholarly literature, or which have been little or not at all recognized in other studies. These observations are of interest to bring to light, especially considering the fact that Plotinus is generally not considered as the first philosophical resource, regarding Augustine's doctrine of the Holy Trinity.¹

1 The issue of the philosophical sources of Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine is still in debate. See Brachtendorf's summary of this controversy in: *Struktur*, 20–24. From this summary there are several points of interests for this study. For example, many scholars, such as Hadot, *i.a.*, point to the Trinitarian doctrine of Porphyry (who posited an equality in the three Hypostases—as Augustine mentioned in *Civ. Dei* x)—and conclude that this would have been communicated to Augustine through the Christian-Platonist Trinitarian theology of Marius Victorinus. This was the Platonist who converted to Christianity and translated Platonist texts (an item which Augustine mentioned in *Conf.* viii.2.3–5).

In this context, another interesting hypothesis is that of E. Benz, who defends the view that Plotinus was Augustine's Trinitarian source (*Marius Victorinus und die Entwicklung des abendländischen Willensmetaphysik*, 1932). (This view was criticized by many.) His theory is: Plotinus, in a later work *Enn.* vi.8 (*The Free Will and the Will of the One*), deviated from his earlier scheme of the One as totally unassociated with Being. The result was that Plotinus inclined towards a looser differentiation between the One and the *Noûs* and towards an equalization of the Hypostases. In this case, the coming into existence of the second Hypostasis would have thus been regarded by Plotinus as a direct procession from the first Hypostasis, instead of solely a metaphysical process outside of the One. As such, the *ἐνέργεια* from the One would not only include Thought, Life, and Being but also Will and Self-knowledge, all of which were received by the *Noûs*. According to Benz, this is detectable in Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine in the unity in self-thinking; and apparently in that of Marius Victorinus as well, which Benz also suggests as Augustine's source. Benz argues that Marius Victorinus would have transformed Plotinus' doctrine to a Christian Trinitarian one, which Augustine

In *Conf.* VII.9.13–14, Augustine praised the Platonists for knowing where the Godhead was but criticized that they did not know how to get there. He showed that they correctly understood that the Godhead could only be of a immaterial nature, eternal and immutable. Additionally, their notion of God demonstrated similarities with the eternal Son of God from John 1: 1–5 (Augustine's *Verbum Dei*), yet they missed the belief in the Incarnation of the Son of God as Jesus Christ. What they also missed was the accompanying theology of Jesus, which entailed, among other things, the notion of Christ as divine intermediary, as well as the importance of humility. In *Civ. Dei*, he brought up again the conception of the Son of God as being an element of the Platonist Godhead agreeing with the *Logos* of John 1: 1–5, however, this time he mentioned the name of Plotinus (x.2.3). Later in x.23, he gave a short description of the triune Godhead in Plotinus' and Porphyry's theologies. Yet thereafter, he did not give this matter any further attention.² However there are more similarities than what Augustine described in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei* which require mention here because they will lead us to more insights on the main inquires of this study.

This section will deal with the similarities in the conception of the triune Godhead of both thinkers and the similarities in the depiction of the relationship between the first and second divine Persons-Hypostases. It will also review the correspondences between the second divine entities (*Verbum*-Intellect). These topics will be followed by a discussion on divine Mediation; comparisons between the Holy Trinity and Plotinus' One; and the Holy Trinity and Plotinus' *Noûs*. Subsequently, two significant differences will be highlighted. A synthesis and the conclusions will be given in the final subsection.

would have found attractive. Hadot refuted many aspects of Benz' hypothesis and argued the greater likelihood of Augustine having directly read Porphyry's doctrine (e.g., *The Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*—the authorship of which Hadot assumed to be Porphyry—an assertion which is not convincing to all). Porphyry would have likewise been the source for Marius Victorinus, who in turn could also have been read by Augustine [P. Hadot, 'L'image de la trinité dans l'âme chez Marius Victorinus et chez saint Augustine', *SP* 81, 409–442; *ibidem*, 'Porphyre et Victorinus', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* (1972, vol. 70, no. 7) 428–443.] There remains all kinds of problematic aspects to these theories, one of which is whether Augustine had indeed read Marius Victorinus directly. These issues—especially that of Porphyry as Augustine's source—entail a great many more complications, thus require further study which exceed the breadth of this research.

- 2 Long before Augustine, Christian Trinitarian theology had already been influenced by Platonism. An extensive inventory of this influence on Christian theology has been compiled by S. Lilla, 'Platonism of the Fathers', in: *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1992) 689–698.

2 The Triune Godhead: Similarities

If Augustine had decided to expand on his observations on the Platonist Godhead in *Civ. Dei*, he would have included many more points of agreement between the Christian and Plotinian notion of the divine. These basic correspondences will be reviewed here shifting from the general to the more specific. The most obvious common ground is the Godhead as primary cause of all existence with a triadic character. In the theogony of Plotinus' three Hypostases and Augustine's three Trinitarian Persons, there exists a certain procession. In Plotinus it is a procession from the three Hypostases coming forth from the other in a hierarchical succession, the second and third Hypostases being an image and lesser than that entity above it. This constitutes a consistent verticality.³ The procession of Augustine's Godhead consists of the Father generating a Son and the mutual love of the Father and the Son generating the Holy Spirit. Augustine's departure point was secure in the tradition of Nicaean Trinitarian theology, in the conviction that all three divine Persons were equal and formed a unity, consisting of horizontality and no hierarchy (*Trin.* 1.2.4, etc.). (The theme 'verticality-horizontality' will be reiterated in section 3 on 'Differences'.)

In *Civ. Dei*, Augustine described Plotinus' theology as consisting of the three Hypostases, which were different in character, yet operated in a certain unity (x.2.3, x.23). Augustine's Godhead was essentially the same; especially in *Trin.* v,⁴ where he analyzed the different missions of the second and third Persons who were nonetheless completely equal in essence or substance. Fattal's thesis that Augustine's doctrine differs from that of Plotinus' due to the latter's '*trithéisme*'—three separate gods—, is therefore not convincing.⁵ It should be said however, that compared to Plotinus' conception of Godhead, Augustine's Christian system literally does not make any sense; it is illogical and furthermore, this knowledge had been derived by Scripture, through revelation, not by philosophical analysis. Although deemed a mystery, Augustine did not simply leave it at that. Instead he set out to substantiate this further by analyzing the human rational soul (*Trin.* vii–xv) which he had designated as the image of God (*Gen. litt.* 111.20.30), in order to search the ways in which the divine Trinity was imaged, in other words, the way in which it was intelligi-

3 *Enn.* v.4.1; v.1.5, etc.; R. Kany explains the differences between Plotinus and Porphyry in this respect, as well in the context of the Platonist tradition. *Augustins Trinitätsdenken Bilanz, Kritik und Weiterführung der modernen Forschung zu "De Trinitate"* (Tübingen, 2007) 436–456.

4 I.e., *Trin.* v.10.9; 1.12.25, vii.4.7–6.12, etc.

5 Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustine*, 106–116.

ble in the human mind. Plotinus explored the thesis that in order to know God, one must know oneself (*Enn.* v.3; v.3.7). Inspired by Plotinus' hypothesis, Augustine endeavored in *Trin.* to determine how far one's self-knowledge could lead to divine knowledge. This point will be examined in greater detail in the upcoming chapters, especially in Chapter 7 on the intellect-image and Chapter 9 on the ascent. We will continue in this section by establishing more of the basic agreements in the notion of Godhead between the two thinkers.

We will proceed with the comparison, starting with the easiest first. Regarding the third divine Person in Augustine or the third Hypostasis in Plotinus, we can be utmost brief. Augustine's Holy Spirit originated from the love radiated from the first Person to the second. Plotinus' Hypostasis, the All-Soul, originated from the second Hypostasis, the Intellect, who in turn originated from the One. These theologies share so little common ground that further analysis is unnecessary.⁶ At most, the third Person/Hypostasis both have in common the function of intermediaries and their immanency in the material world. On the other hand, the similarities between the two second divine entities (Augustine's transcendent *Verbum Dei* and Plotinus' Intellect) are numerous and therefore will require a more elaborate illustration. It is however difficult to determine to what extent God the Father in Augustine's cosmology resembles Plotinus' One. The following point will shed more light on this.

2.1 *The Relationship between the First and Second Divine Persons-Hypostases*

Augustine made use of Jesus' words that in order to come to the Father one must go through the Son (for instance in Matt. 11:20, John 14:6).⁷ For Augustine, this involved the Son in his two natures: the eternal Word of God in his earthly Incarnation, as well as his post-incarnational existence,⁸ speaking to humans as the Inner Teacher.⁹ This aspect was true in Plotinus' theology as far as his

6 Augustine noted this in *Civ. Dei.* x.23 as well. Here Augustine attempts to come to terms with Porphyry's conception of the triune Godhead and whether there is a Holy Spirit involved.

7 '... The fact is that the "man Christ Jesus, mediator of God and men" (1 Tim. 2:5), now reigning for all "the just who live by faith" (Heb. 2:4), is going to bring them to direct sight of God, to the "face to face" vision, as the apostle calls it (1 Cor 13:12), that is what is meant by "When he hands the kingdom over to God and the Father" as though to say when he brings believers to a direct contemplation of God and the Father.' (*Trin.* 1.8.16).

8 *Trin.* 1.8.16–17, 9.18–19, 10.20, 12.24, etc.

9 *Conf.* XI.2–11; *Trin.* XIV.15.21.

depiction of the ascent to the One was concerned. The mind could not possibly unite with the One without uniting first with the Intellect.¹⁰ It could not prepare for the ultimate experience of union without purifying oneself and molding one's consciousness first to that of the *Noûs*.¹¹

Regarded in this perspective, it appears that Augustine depicted God the Father as completely transcendent and even inaccessible, having absolutely no direct contact with the material, created world, much like Plotinus' One and *Noûs*. Plotinus' first Hypostasis was deemed incomprehensible. Does the same hold true for Augustine's conception of God the Father? The role or 'function' of the Father in Augustine's doctrine remains unclear—he seems to have no other function at all besides being the generator of the Son and the Spirit and being simultaneously equal to them. *Trin.* does not seem to provide any further explicit characteristics of God the Father.¹² Below we will see how a comparison of Augustine's Trinity with Plotinus' One or the *Noûs* produces more interesting results.

For now we will proceed to the crux of this point concerning the relationship between the first and second divine Persons in the divine Father and Son relationship. Plotinus used these designations as well: the One as Father (or the Fatherland)¹³ with the *Noûs* playing the role as the Son¹⁴ and then in a second instance: the Intellect in the role of Father (*Enn.* v.1.7.44–46) in which his off-

10 'If there is anything after the First, it must necessarily come from the First; it must either come from it directly or have its ascent back to it through the beings between, and there must be an order of seconds and thirds, the second going back to the first and the third to the second.' *Enn.* v.4.1; See also v.5.6.20–23.

11 See Chapter 3.4 and *Enn.* 111.8.11.20; v1.7.35. 'You must become first all godlike and all beautiful if you intend to see God and Beauty. First the soul will come in its ascent to intellect and there will know the Forms, all beautiful and will affirm that these, the Ideas, are beauty; for all things are beautiful by these by the products of intellect and essence. That which is beyond this we call the nature of the Good (LZ: the One) ... primary Beauty ... beyond the spring and origin of beauty ...' *Enn.* 1.6.9.32–43.

12 The following passage suggests that Augustine believes that God the Father is ineffable and simple like Plotinus' One. 'For the charity of the Father in his inexpressibly simple nature is nothing but his very nature and substance And thus "the Son of his Charity" (Col. 1:13) signifies none other than the one who is born of his (LZ: God the Father's) substance.' (*Trin.* xv.19.37). As all characteristics of the second divine Person, such as Wisdom and Love, Augustine also applies ineffability and simplicity to the Holy Trinity as a whole. He questions who God the Father is from passages in Genesis in the creation story in the Garden of Eden, appearing before the Jewish patriarchs, etc. In *Trin.* 11.10.17, he concludes that it is possible that Scripture passes imperceptibly from Trinitarian Person to Person.

13 I.e., *Enn.* 1.6.8.22, v.8.1, v1.8.14.35–40, etc.

14 I.e., *Enn.* 111.8.11.37, v.1.3, etc.

spring, in plurality, were the image-Λόγος of the Intellect, the Soul, as well as the individual intellects-λόγοι.¹⁵ In *Trin.*, the terminology of the relationship Father-Son in the Holy Trinity (*parens-proles*) was extensively utilized, even applied to the human mind.¹⁶ Augustine explicated however that the terminology Father-Son was not to be understood in a sense-oriented mode of thinking.¹⁷ The same can be assumed for Plotinus as well.¹⁸ In fact it could be argued that both thinkers intended the Father-Son relationship in their conception of the Godhead to be understood metaphorically.

Hence, this point illustrates that Plotinus' centralization of the second Hypostasis in relation to its Father was likely highly interesting for Augustine. It not only corresponded to the Christian divine Father-Son relationship but paved the way for him to accept other aspects of Plotinus' philosophy and integrate them into his own philosophical exposition of the Godhead. Augustine's account of the ascent of the soul was likewise centered upon the second Person and his relation to the First.

2.2 *The Second Divine Person: the Verbum-Noûs: the Axis of Cosmology and Redemption*¹⁹

Augustine showed his awareness of the correspondences between the second Person in Christian doctrine and the second Hypostasis Intellect in Neo-Platonism in *Conf.* VII.9.13, in his mentioning of the similarities between the Christian Son of God and an entity of which he had read in the *libri platoniorum*. He recognized the affinities again in *Civ. Dei* x.28 where he discussed the Νοûς πατρικός in Porphyry's conception of the Godhead and associated

15 Treated in Chapter 3.2. See also the subsection 'Divine Mediation' below.

16 E.g., *Trin.* IX.9.14–end; XI.7.11; XV.10.19, 11.20 and 14.24.

17 In *Trin.* XII.5.5, Augustine refutes a person who posits that there should be a Mother involved in the generation of the Son and the Holy Spirit—an etymologically feminine term in Hebrew—which should be regarded as daughter of the Father.

18 See R. Ferwerda on the metaphorical nature and terms of 'Father' and 'children', especially in Plotinus' utilization of Greek mythology, *La signification des images*, 76–80.

19 There are opponents to the view that Augustine modelled his *Verbum Dei* on the characteristics of the Νοûς. One example of many: V. Boland deems the differences between the two thinkers' conceptions of the Godhead as too radical for meriting plausibility. 'In fact Augustine seems to be unaware of the nature of Plotinus' hypostases.' Boland conceded that Augustine may have assimilated the One and the Intellect in his thinking, e.g., in *Div. qu.* 23 (LZ: incorrect reference), but maintains that this did not survive long in this thinking. [*Ideas in God According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, Source and Synthesis* (Leiden, 1995) 87]. Boland's conclusions are based on a superficial acquaintance with *The Enneads* as well as Augustine's later works (as shown in his final statement) which my study, in particular on *Trin.*, can easily refute.

him with Christ.²⁰ There is abundant literature on the common characteristics between Augustine's *Verbum Dei* and Plotinus' Νοῦς.²¹ Because the points of correspondence here are plentiful, it will be practical to just enumerate the similarities briefly with their references. Many of the points listed here were already pointed out in the material treated in previous chapters.

– The Νοῦς is a Λόγος, an utterance and an image of the One (Fatherland). The *Verbum Dei* is a Word-utterance of God the Father.²²

– Augustine's *Verbum Dei* is 'through whom God created the world' or the Creator (*Trin.* IV.1.3). Plotinus' Νοῦς is the demiurge, in whom the intelligible world existed, the invisible, immaterial basis of all material existence, the creator of the divine Soul. The divine Soul (Nature) and divine Λόγος are Forming principles and creators involved directly with the material world (*Enn.* III.2.2).

– The Ideas are in the Νοῦς in Plotinus; the Νοῦς and the intelligible world in Plotinus are one (*Enn.* v.5.1, etc.); Augustine's *Verbum Dei* is likewise the source of the eternal creation principles.²³ For humans, they (both the divine Person and the Ideas) serve as objects of contemplation while rising to a higher consciousness of God.²⁴

– The *Verbum Dei* is also described by Augustine with characteristics of Plotinus' notion of Λόγος (as well as the World Soul): as the divine entity responsible for the material creation and Formation (Rational) Principle.²⁵ The *Rationes*, the creation principles which exist in Augustine's *Verbum Dei*, were the 'Ideas of God', as well as the Form principles for all things existing in the world. They occur, just as the Λόγος/λόγοι, on three levels of reality. In this way, the Plotinian Λόγος and the Augustinian *Verbum Dei* both share the trait of being transcendent as well as immanent in the visual world. This latter aspect is explained in more detail in the point below on 'Divine Mediation'.

20 Porphyry's conception of 'Father Intellect' is essentially the same as that of Plotinus; the difference between their conceptions is that Porphyry presumably does not always adhere to Plotinus' general strict hierarchy of the hypostases. In a later treatise, Plotinus described the One as associated with Being and Substance (*Enn.* VI.8.15 and 16). Porphyry brings the Hypostases to a more or less triune equality. This is the subject of discussion a few sections further in *Civ. Dei* X.23, where Augustine returns to Porphyry's and Plotinus' metaphors of the Father in the Neo-Platonist triune Godhead.

21 See e.g., Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος', 249–250; Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin*, 83–88; Gilson, *Introduction*, 265–275; Perler, *Der Nus bei Plotin*; Brachtendorf, *Stuktur*, e.g., 18.

22 Plotinus: Chapter 3.2; e.g., *Enn.* v.1.7.1–5; VI.7.17.39. In VI.7, trace (ἔχρος) is used synonymously with image (εἰκών); Augustine: Chapter 4.2.7; e.g., *Gen. litt.* I.2.6, 4.9, 5.11; *Trin.* IV.20.27, VII.1.1 XV.14.23, 21.40.

23 Chapter 4.2.2. *Trin.* IV.1.3; *Gen. litt.* II.8.17, etc.

24 Plotinus: *Enn.* v.5.2; Augustine: Chapter 4.4; *De Ideis*, *Gen. litt.* XII.27.25.

25 Treated in Chapters 3.2.5–6 and 4.2.2; Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος', 240, 249–250, 254–255.

– In Augustine's thought, the *Verbum Dei* is eternal and unchangeable, yet he manifests in the human world: firstly in his Incarnation in world history and then in human minds and hearts as model and inner Teacher. The Holy Spirit, equally divine, manifests in human hearts and minds through the outpouring of love. The human world and the highest part of the human mind, the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* are certainly not divine but temporal and mutable. Thus the contact of the second and third Persons of the Trinity with the external world does not affect their transcendent character; they retain their divinity, dwelling in the realm of eternity and changelessness (*Trin.* IV.20.27–28). This construction corresponds to Plotinus' Soul-Nature and the Λόγος; they are transcendent divine entities which manifest immanently in the world as well as within the human being.²⁶ While forming matter, they remain divine and transcendent.

– The second divine entities of both thinkers are associated with eternal Light and Wisdom—the origin of all knowledge. Plotinus' Νοῦς is not only the source of the divine Ideas (or Life) which one perceives through illumination, it is Wisdom and Truth itself, precisely as Augustine's second divine Person, the *Verbum Dei*. The following quote from the *Enn.* illustrates the characteristics of the Intellect which are similar to those of Augustine's *Verbum Dei*.

This life is wisdom, wisdom not acquired by reasonings, because it is always present, without failing which would make it need to be searched for; for it is the first, not derived from any other wisdom: the very being of Intellect is wisdom: it does not exist first and then become wise. For this reason, there is no greater wisdom: absolute knowledge²⁷ has its throne beside Intellect in their common revelation, as they say symbolically Justice is throned beside Zeus. All things of this kind there are, like images seen by their own light, to be beheld by 'exceedingly blessed spectators'.²⁸ The greatness and power of this wisdom can be imagined if we consider

26 *Enn.* III.8.2: treated in Chapter 3.2 and 3.

27 Αὐτοεπιστήμη is translated here by Armstrong as 'absolute knowledge'. His note on pp. 252–253 (*Enneads*, VI) introduces a puzzling aspect of the Intellect: 'Plotinus distinguishes absolute knowledge and Intellect even in their common revelation: they are clearly not quite the same thing for him.' As I see it, if absolute knowledge and the Intellect are not one in the same, then 'absolute knowledge' could only refer to the One. Yet the term αὐτοεπιστήμη suggests to me the unity of subject and object as in the knowledge of the Intellect. The One does not know or think itself, as this would entail a duplicity.

28 As Plotinus explains in V.8.5.20–25: 'exceedingly blessed spectators' are gods in the higher world contemplating the Beauty of the Forms.

that it has with it and has made all things, and all things follow it, and it is the real beings, and they came to be along with it, and both are one, and reality is wisdom there.²⁹

Enn. v.8.4.40–49

This citation does not include all the common characteristics between the *Verbum Dei* and the Νοῦς, but in its brevity it does include many, such as: the association of the second Hypostasis with Wisdom; and a reference to the relationship between the first Hypostasis and the second, ‘it does not exist first and then become wise’. There is an astonishing similarity to Augustine’s words in *Trin.* vii.1.2: ‘If in this case to be is the same as to be wise, it follows that the Father is not wise with the wisdom he has begotten; otherwise he did not beget it, but it begot him.’³⁰ Other common elements from the passage above are: the inclusion of Justice: ‘Justice is throned beside Zeus.’ (I am assuming here that Plotinus is using Zeus as an allegory for the Intellect, as he does elsewhere and that Justice is an Idea.) Augustine also associated Christ with Justice (*Trin.* xiii.11.15 as in *Rom.* 5:9); Light: ‘images seen by their own light, to be beheld by “exceedingly blessed spectators”’—as in the Ideas seen in the Light of the Intellect; and the unity of the noetic realm ‘both are one’ and ultimate truth of the reality: ‘reality is wisdom there’. I am not suggesting that Augustine would have seen these passages and borrowed these elements. Elements such as God as Wisdom and Justice, the relationship of the second to the first divine Person are rampant in the bible as well. Augustine also associated the Creator, *Verbum Dei* with Wisdom, Light, Being and the intelligible world. If he had indeed read this treatise, then this passage would have likely convinced him that Christianity and Platonism shared many common elements, as he expressed repeatedly in *Civ. Dei* (for example, viii.1).

– Another interesting correspondence is Augustine’s application of the Platonist triad of Life, Being and Thought to the Son, Christ, characterizing the second Person as Knowledge and Understanding.³¹ This is completely in line with Plotinus, who used the same designations for the Intellect.³² Again, the

29 Plotinus is differentiating here discursive with non-discursive reason, the latter of which is the domain of the Intellect, associated with Heaven (Οὐρανός).

30 Augustine is clearly refuting this argument as he expresses more clearly in vii.2.3: ‘So the Father and the Son are together one being and one greatness and one truth and one wisdom. But the Father and the Son are not both together one Word because they are not both together one Son.’ The latter statement could be easily applied to the Father and Son relationship of the One and the Intellect in Plotinus’ theology as well.

31 *Trin.* vi.10.11–12; see Chapter 5.2.

32 E.g., *Enn.* v.1.4.25–30; v.3.5.29–37; v.9.10.10–13; treated in Chapter 3.2.2 and 3.4.3.

following quote is not intended to be a proof of Augustine's borrowing from Plotinus; rather of how Augustine integrated Plotinian concepts into his own thought.

PLOTINUS: There (LZ: in the realm of the One), surely, one need not wonder if that which the soul pursues and which gives light to Intellect and in falling upon it stirs a trace (LZ: trace: synonymous with 'image') of itself, (LZ: the One) has so great a power, and draws to itself and calls back from all wandering to rest beside it. For there is something from which all things come, there is nothing stronger than it, but all things are less than it (VI.7.23.1–7) ... What then does it (LZ: the One) make, if it is like this? It made Intellect, it made life and from Intellect the souls and all else that has a share in reason or intellect or life. Then, surely, what is "source and principle" of these, how could one say in what way and how greatly it is good? But what is it making now? Now as well it is keeping those things in being and making the thinking things think and the living things live, inspiring thought, inspiring life and, if something cannot live, existence.

Enn. VI.7.23.19–end

Here, Plotinus writes of the source of the Intellect, the One—the Good, from which all things emanate and of which the Intellect is a trace or an image, which calls all things after it, back to it and the One. At the end of this quote, the characteristics of Intellect are enumerated: Absolute Thought, Being and Life. Not mentioned in this quote, are the Ideas or Forms pertaining to Being and Life in the noetic realm. In the chapter preceding this one (*Enn.* VI.7.22), Plotinus explains the origin of all perceptible beauty in material images in the eternal Forms, whose source, as well as the source of all love, is the One. The One is not equal to the Intellect, it is its source, thus greater than the *Noûs*. Yet Being, Life and Thought are one in the *Noûs*. Augustine's borrowing of these noetic characteristics is best expressed in *Trin.* VI.10.11–12. Here he mentions the *Verbum Dei's* equality to God the Father as perfect Image of God, in whom the characteristics Thought (as Understanding) Being, and Life exist, and in whom the unchangeable Forms exist. *Verbum Dei* exists in perfect unity with the entire Holy Trinity, thus in principle, the triad of Life, Being and Thought applies equally to the whole Godhead.

AUGUSTINE: As regards the image, I suppose that he (LZ: Hilary) mentioned 'form' on account of the beauty involved in such harmony, in that primordial equality and primordial likeness, where there is no discord and no inequality and no kind of unlikeness, but identical correspon-

dence with that of which it is the image; where there is supreme and primordial life, such that it is not one thing to live and another to be, but being and living are the same; and where there is supreme and primordial understanding (*primus ac summus intellectus*) such that it is not one thing to understand (*intellegere*) and another to live, but understanding is identical with living, identical with all things, being as it were one perfect Word to which nothing is lacking, which is like the art of the almighty and wise God, full of all the living and unchanging ideas, which are all one in it, as it is one from the one with whom it is one.

Trin. VI.10.11–12

– The *Verbum* and Νοῦς as Wisdom and Light are the main objects of contemplation for the human intellect. Plotinus states that the coming of existence of the world and all beings is the result of contemplation (*Enn.* 111.8.7). Contemplation is also the activity which one ultimately desires and is the goal (*Enn.* 111.8.5–7). The Νοῦς turns to contemplate his Father, the One (v.1.7.6) who is the origin of all things, of all Love and Beauty.³³ The divine Soul and the human soul imitate the Intellect's contemplation of the One. In a similar way, Augustine stresses that it is Christ, the Son, Creator Word and Jesus Christ, who will bring the faithful to contemplation of Himself and the Father.³⁴ 'So the Father and the Son are together one being and one greatness and one truth and one wisdom.' (*Trin.* VII.2.3). Augustine also writes: 'This contemplation is promised us, as the end of all activities and the eternal perfection of all joys.' (*Trin.* I.8.17). He is referring here to the *visio Dei* in the afterlife which is also the goal: it is a reward of faith; as well as the reward of love and desire (*Trin.* I.9). 'In that contemplation, then, God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28), because nothing further will be desired of him, to be illumined and rejoiced by him will be enough.' (I.10.21). Creatures turn inward to become enlightened by the Creator, who calls its creation back to itself.³⁵

2.3 *Divine Mediation: Λόγος and Verbum*

Augustine and Plotinus both emphasized the differentiation between God's creation and the material world. Both saw the necessity to include a form of

33 E.g., *Enn.* 111.8.11.20.

34 *Trin.* I.8.15–17, 9.18.

35 *Gen. litt.* I.3.7–4.9; '... so that it (LZ: the first creation) can be given the form by adhering to the creator, and by imitating in its own measure the form (LZ: Creator-Word, Christ) which adheres eternally and unchangeably to the Father, and which instantly gets from him to be the same thing as he is.' (*Gen. litt.* I.4.9).

mediation between the divine and physical worlds. In *Civ. Dei* IX.17 (Chapter 2.2), Augustine criticized the Platonist theurgists for using demons as assistance to approach the divine, but did not criticize Plotinus for failing to recognize the need for an intermediary. That is likely due to the fact that in Plotinus' cosmology, the use of intermediaries was rampant, although these were in no way comparable to the theurgist's demons.

Let us briefly review Plotinus' mediation from the divine to the material world. This was explained in detail in Chapter 3 on Plotinus in the sections on Plotinus' theogony as it pertained to the transmission of the eternal Forms from the Intellect down to the realm of matter. The mediation occurred primarily through the lower Hypostases Nature-Soul and the Λόγος because the Νοῦς, the demiurge, never had direct contact with matter. The job of Nature-Soul was not only to create matter but also endow it with Form. This latter task was performed in conjunction with the energy of the Λόγος. In this way, visible things would evolve and become visible to our senses. Through this formation process, material things became images of Ideas. As mediators of the Forms to the lowest region of existence (matter), the Λόγοι driven by the transcendent Λόγος outcoming from the Intellect, served as agents between the eternal, transcendent and divine realms of the Intellect and the Soul, and the visible cosmos. In this mediating role, the Λόγοι assured a system of communication between the different levels of reality.³⁶

Chapter 4.2 illustrated how Augustine conceived the creation process in detail: the *Rationes* originating from the *Verbum*, manifesting as Form principles in the two levels of creation (intelligible and material).³⁷ The crux of the matter here is that the general Plotinian system of mediating Λόγοι is present with few changes in Augustine's cosmology. Solignac pointed these similarities out in 1972.³⁸ In my article from 2010, I used the evidence in Solignac's study as a departure point in order to demonstrate how the doctrine of the divine Λόγος of Plotinus was emphatically present in Augustine's doctrine of creation

36 E.g., *Enn.* 11.9.1.33 and 11.9.1.57–63. The Soul shares with the Λόγος some of the same functions in the Plotinian cosmogony, for example as maker of the world and also as mediator of the Forms from the Intellect to the individual souls. However, in *Enn.* 111.2.2, the Λόγος is indicated as the most important intermediary and almost achieves the status of a Hypostasis. In the second and third treatises of this book, Plotinus states that individual souls are governed by the Λόγος, the ruler of the visible world. In sum, in these treatises of book 111, the Λόγος holds a much more influential status than the Soul as creator of the world (*Enn.* 111.8.3).

37 As stated in *Gen. litt.* e.g., 1.4.9, 11.6.12–13.

38 Agaësse and Solignac, *BA* 48: 'Les raisons causales', 657–668; 'Les Logos et les Logoi chez Plotin', 654–657.

and his conception of the Creator, the *Verbum Dei*.³⁹ For the sake of this point on divine mediation in Plotinus and Augustine, let us now review my conclusions. In comparing the two cosmologies, I showed that Plotinus' Λόγοι and Augustine's *Rationes* both served as manifestations of the transcendent eternal Ideas belonging to God and thereby effectuated the process of imaging. These brought life and human bodies into the visible world and assured that vegetative growth would take place according to the laws of structural development.

Additionally I showed how the *Verbum Dei*—as Creator and as Intermediary between the divine and physical world—, which naturally included his Incarnation as Jesus Christ—could be both immanent and transcendent. This was to illustrate that the *Verbum Dei* was in this sense comparable to Plotinus' divine Soul-Nature and Λόγος; their manifestations being immanent in the world. This conclusion provides a substantial supplement to the previous point in which the correspondences between the characteristics of Plotinus' Intellect and Augustine *Verbum Dei* were enumerated and deemed plentiful. As demonstrated in my article, we could also assume that the Λόγος corresponded to Augustine's *Verbum* in some respects more precisely than the Νοῦς. This was because Plotinus' Νοῦς always remained in the intelligible world and had no contact with matter, which was not true for Augustine's *Verbum Dei*. This important observation is missed by many researchers.⁴⁰ Supporting the assumed influence of Plotinus' notion of the divine Λόγος on Augustine's doctrines is the church father's own remarks in *Civ. Dei* x.17 (see Chapter 2.2). Here Augustine commended Plotinus for his principle of divine Providence, which in the *Enneads* was designated as the Λόγος. The mediation of *Rationes* and Λόγοι to the visible world would naturally have impact on the human soul, *ratio*/λόγος, especially when turned to contemplate the Ideas.

Furthermore, Augustine's *Rationes* fulfilled approximately the same mediatory function as the Λόγος and λόγοι. The *rationes causales*, for example, mediated between their transcendent source, the *Verbum* and the corporeal world, the *rationes seminales*. In this way, Augustine depicted the *Verbum Dei* and his *rationes* as mediator between God and humans, just as the Λόγος and λόγοι in the cosmology of Plotinus.

39 Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος', 252–261.

40 E.g., Perler, *Der Nus bei Plotin*, 23–25, 31, 47, 72–74; Gilson, *Introduction*, 1969, 275, note 1, 261–263; Brown, *Augustine*, (1975) 98; Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin*, 83–88; J. Brachtendorf, *Augustins Confessiones* (Darmstadt, 2005) 130–131; J.M. Quinn, *A Companion to the Confessions of Augustine* (New York, 2002) 360–366.

There is another aspect of agreement concerning divine mediation between the two thinkers: in Plotinus' cosmogony, the Λόγος and the λόγοι exercised their most significant powers on three levels: of the Νοῦς, the Soul and the material world. This corresponds neatly with Augustine's three levels of existence in which the *Verbum* and the *Rationes* are at work.⁴¹ These were: the realm of the *Verbum Dei* and then at the two 'moments' of creation, respectively at the intelligible and the physical level.

This point on divine mediation, illustrating the clear influence of Plotinus' notion of Λόγος on Augustine's doctrine, is therefore of direct relevance for the analysis in the next section. It serves as further support in elaborating how Plotinus' notion of Λόγος alongside his doctrines of imaging, epistemology and Intellect, was of seminal importance to Augustine's doctrine of the image of God and his epistemology. The axis of these two doctrines is namely the contemplation of the Forms and Ideas. In the cosmologies of both thinkers, the Forms were designated as synonymous with respectively the Λόγοι and the *Rationes*.⁴² Thus the *Rationes* and Λόγοι also play an important role in the ascent of the soul to God. There are however some significant discrepancies regarding divine mediation between the two thinkers which require mentioning, which will be discussed below in 'Differences'.

2.4 *Augustine's Holy Trinity and Plotinus' One*

In the discussion on the triune Godhead, it was mentioned that it was unclear as to whether there was a similarity between the Augustine's and Plotinus' first divine Person/Hypostasis. A similarity was found in the subsection proceeding it, which was formulated in the relationship between the first and second divinities. A parallel does in fact exist between Augustine's Trinity and the Plotinian One, namely in the aspect of unity.⁴³ The incomprehensibility of the One, according to Plotinus, was due to its being beyond Form, Substance, Being and Thought,⁴⁴ which was for human minds beyond description and comprehension.

PLOTINUS: In what sense, then, do we call it one, and how are we to fit it into our thought? 'One' must be understood in a larger sense than that in

41 This was elaborated in Chapter 4.2; Augustine: *Gen. litt.* v.7.28, *Trin.* 111.8.13–19.19; and Plotinus: *Enn.* 111.2.2.15–40; 111.3.5.10 and 111.3.4.20, 25–30.

42 Plotinus: e.g., *Enn.* 111.2.2.36-treated in Chapter 3.2.5 and 3.2.6; Augustine: e.g., *De Ideis*, *Gen. litt.* 1.9.17; treated in Chapter 4.2.2.

43 See Fattal's discussion: *Plotin chez Augustin*, 106–121 and on apophatism.

44 In contrast, Augustine's Trinity was pure Being and Substance (e.g., *Trin.* v.2.3–3.4).

which a unity and a point are unified ... it is the greatest of all things not in size but in power, so that its sizelessness also is a matter of power; ... And it must be understood as infinite not because its size and number cannot be measured or counted but because its power cannot be comprehended.

Enn. VI.9.6.1–13

The One was the only Hypostasis containing the most perfect unity because it had no parts or divisions. There are passages in *Trin.* in which these same characteristics were applied to the Holy Trinity. See in the example below, in which Augustine affirmed the ‘unbounded and infinite’ character of the Holy Trinity.

AUGUSTINE: So then, to direct our gaze to the Creator by understanding the things that are made (Rom 1:20), we should understand him as a triad, whose traces appear in creation in a way that is fitting. In that supreme triad is the source of all things, and the most perfect beauty and wholly blissful delight. Those three seem both to be bounded or determined by each other, and yet in themselves to be unbounded and infinite⁴⁵

Trin. VI.10.12

Augustine’s passage on the unity of the Trinity seems to make reference to another aspect of Plotinus’ conception of the One: the most perfect beauty and wholly blissful delight. In *Enn.* I.6.7.30, Plotinus wrote: ‘For this, since it (LZ: the One) is beauty, most of all primary beauty, makes its lovers beautiful and lovable.’ Additionally, in Plotinus’ account of the ascent to the One in *Enn.* VI.9.11.11–29, he utilizes the word *ἔκστασις* to depict the blissful union. Also, Augustine spoke often of the singular character of the Word of God which was beyond human language⁴⁶ and by virtue of the unity of the Godhead, this applied to all three Persons. ‘... the Word of God which is the Form of God without first being formable and afterwards formed and which could never ever be formless, but is simple form and simply equal to him from whom it is and with whom it is wonderfully co-eternal ...’ (*Trin.* XV.16.25).

To conclude, both thinkers posited the incomprehensibility of God in similar ways, as well as the intelligibility of God, discussed in the next section below. (For Augustine, see Chapter 5.2.8.) Plotinus’ One provided another area for comparison in Augustine’s doctrine of the Trinity which will be treated in Chapter 8 on Love. Here we will examine how the Godhead involves divine

45 Another exemplary passage is XV.7.13, where Augustine emphasized that the wisdom of God was incomprehensible for the human mind.

46 *Trin.* XV.14.24, 16.26.

Love, such as Augustine's conception of God as Love and Good, comparable to Plotinus' notion Ἐρως coming forth from the One, the Good. As well, there are certain correspondences between Plotinus' notion of divine love and Augustine's Holy Spirit (or his depiction of the whole Trinity.)

2.5 Augustine's Holy Trinity—Plotinus' Intellect

In answer to the question which concepts Augustine borrowed from Plotinus for his formulation of his doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Brachtendorf responds that it was the Νοῦς.⁴⁷ However, Brachtendorf negates the correspondences with the One. He argues that because Plotinus described the One as beyond Being, Form and Thought, this conception would have been useless for Augustine.⁴⁸ Yet as we have just seen in the point above, Augustine did associate the Trinity with many of the same characteristics as Plotinus' first Principle. Nonetheless, Brachtendorf's observations on the similarities of Augustine's Holy Trinity and the Plotinian second Hypostasis are also relevant. He lays emphasis on the phenomenon of self-referencing in Augustine's explication of the Holy Trinity⁴⁹ which was similar to the aspect of the Intellect 'thinking itself'. Plotinus devoted a whole treatise on the subject, *Enn.* v.3. Self-referencing was most conspicuous in Plotinus' depiction of the relationship between the One and the Νοῦς, at the initial conception of the Νοῦς contemplating its source, the One. (See Chapter 3, sections 2.2 and 4.2.) In doing so, receiving its characteristics from the One, the Intellect conceived itself as: I am thinking, I am existing; therefore it became pure Thinking, Being and Life (*Enn.* v.3.5). The self-consciousness of the Νοῦς was thus instigated by the realization that He existed and was thinking. Additionally, this encompassed the awareness of its own ἐν πολλὰ structure, in which multiplicity occurred within unity (*Enn.* v.3.11). This was exemplified by the self-knowledge of the Νοῦς: the intelligible Ideas in their plurality being identical with the Intellect. The multiplicity of the Νοῦς constituted its distinction from its source, the One and its perfect unity. Brachtendorf points out as well the self-referencing and the ἐν πολλὰ structure as characteristic of Augustine's doctrine of Trinity.⁵⁰ The difference in

47 Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 15–24.

48 *Ibidem*, 15: 'Ausser der Hierarchisierung der Hypostasen weist Augustin vor allem Plotins These zurück, das höchste Prinzip sei jenseits von Sein und Denken.'

49 Chapter 5.4: self-referencing is implied in divine *Memoria*; *Trin.* xv.14.23. Admittedly, this aspect is not immediately obvious in *Trin.* and is only mentioned once.

50 Brachtendorf discusses the Plotinian characterization of the Νοῦς in the context of e.g., self-knowledge, self-referencing, the triadic Being-Life-Thought (*Struktur*, 24–34). He then explains how Augustine applied these characteristics in his conception of the Holy Trinity and accordingly how Augustine depicts the human mind perceiving the Trinity in itself

Augustine's thought was that the self-referencing in the Trinity did not constitute an ontological diminution as did in Plotinus' hierarchical conception of the Hypostases. In this way, Augustine's formulation of the mutual penetration of the divine Persons entailed a much compacter cohesion than the three Hypostases of Plotinus.⁵¹ This was the result of Augustine's characterizations of the three divine Persons being equally applied to the other Persons as a whole. (The exceptions to this were their specific missions and the relationship between the Father and the Son). Every divine Person represented the other and no one Person could be greater than another. Seen in this way, the unity of Augustine's Trinity corresponds in fact more to the triadic unity of the Intellect and the multiplicity of its intelligible world, Brachtendorf argues, than to the absolute unity of Plotinus' first Hypostasis.⁵² Brachtendorf adds that the intelligible world as depicted by Augustine, lacked the cohesion of Plotinus' theory. This could mean that Augustine took less interest in describing the relationship of the Ideas to the *Verbum* and their differentiation. Augustine also did not elaborate on the relationship of unity to multiplicity to the extent which Plotinus did.⁵³ Brachtendorf's observations are well-founded, yet by neglecting the similarities between the unity of the Trinity in Augustine's doctrine and the conception of the One in Plotinus', he missed the whole picture. Both the One and the Intellect were relevant to Augustine. From here onwards we will deal with points of difference which have not yet been treated in this exposition.

3 Differences

3.1 *A Personal Relationship*

Notwithstanding the Father/Son metaphor which Plotinus employed for his conception of the Godhead, one might get the impression that Plotinus' Hypostases themselves were abstract and impersonal principles.⁵⁴ Emilsson's statement articulates a general scholarly consensus: '... the notion of the divine in major thinkers in the Christian tradition, such as St. Augustine, has indeed been heavily coloured by Plotinus' notion of Intellect. We should however be on our

as its image (*ibidem*, 52–54). See also his exposition on the correspondences of the 'one-many' structure in *Struktur*, 15–19 in relation to e.g., *Enn.* v.1.8, IV.2.2, etc.

51 *Ibidem*, *Struktur*, 18–20.

52 *Ibidem*, 15–19.

53 L. Ayres contrasts Augustine's usage of duality and unity with that of Plotinus, using *Trin.* x.8.11–10.16 as an example. These passages refer to human self-knowledge acquiring a unity of mind (not the divine): 'Discipline of Self-Knowledge', 261–296; 280–287.

54 Emilsson, *Plotinus on Intellect*, 5–6.

guard in transferring features of the Christian God to the Intellect. The latter, for instance, lacks all the personal characteristics of the former.⁵⁵

This point-of-view is largely feasible. However, for the sake of accuracy, it must be said that Plotinus did not altogether exclude personal or human aspects to describe the Godhead. He sometimes dramatized the *Noûs*, for example, as 'falling wildly in love' with its source, the Good (*Enn.* VI.7.22.1–10). Another example of his usage of typically human characteristics to depict the divine has to do with the 'defects', as discussed extensively in Chapter 3.4, the sense of 'failure' of the *Noûs* to transcend its own mode of thought and find ultimate gratification in the love for the Good.⁵⁶ Plotinus sometimes personified aspects of the All-Soul, in particular Soul-Nature, who for example, longed to attach herself to corporality and thus contemplated poorly,⁵⁷ which was the beginning of sin in humans.⁵⁸

All in all, Plotinus did not intend these descriptions to contradict his underlying ontology, that the divine was unchanging and eternal. Nor did these personal elements in the Godhead contradict the autonomous and transcendent character of the Godhead. The Hypostases did not approach humans in a direct or personal way. For example, Plotinus stated consistently that the *Noûs* always remained in the intellectual domain of the transcendent and intelligible.⁵⁹ Although the *Noûs* was always present in the human intellect, a personal calling of an individual by this entity was missing in his philosophy.

Plotinus likewise did not seem to depict a personal relationship with the Hypostases, that is, a mutual emotional relationship of the human soul-intellect with its source. On the other hand, as we saw in Plotinus' depiction of the ascent to love in Chapter 3.4, the soul would never rise to the One unless it experienced the love and beauty of the *Noûs* and the Ideas (*Enn.* III.5 and VI.7). The wondrous beauty of the Ideas incurred awe and desire for more. Union with the One was characterized as blissful or quiet ecstasy, yet also comparable with two lovers united in love (*Enn.* VI.9.10). The soul may have had a strong relationship to its source, but the other way around did not seem to hold true for Plotinus.

It is evident that the personal dimension in the Godhead was more far-reaching and pronounced in Augustine, who moreover demonstrated in almost all his works and especially in his doctrine of the image of God/Trinity, that a

55 *Ibidem*, 5.

56 E.g., *Enn.* V.3.11, III.8.8.30–end, III.8.11.23.

57 *Enn.* III.8.4.14–end, III.8.5, 1–25.

58 Treated in Chapter 3.3; *Enn.* II.3.17.18–25; II.4.5, etc.

59 E.g., *Enn.* V.3.7.13–35; V.4.2.21–37.

Christian should have a strong, dependent relationship with the second entity of the Trinity, the Son and Word of God. This relationship was most prevalent throughout *Conf.* in which Augustine was engaged in a continuous dialogue with God. There, a mutual, personal relationship was depicted in which Christ consoled humans and in which divine intervention was possible, for example by the initiative of Christ's grace. In Augustine's view, God loved his creatures unceasingly.

Although Plotinus did not have a doctrine of grace, he did believe that the divine called its creatures back to the Godhead. 'There, surely, one need not wonder if that which the soul pursues and which gives light to Intellect and in falling upon it, stirs a trace of itself, has so great a power, and draws to itself and calls back from all wandering to rest beside it.'⁶⁰ This means that the first and second Hypostases touched human souls profoundly by their force of attraction, as illustrated in Plotinus' depiction of the ascent by means of the forces of Ἔρως, Beauty and Light, which at the same time awakened souls to desire their true origins (Chapter 3.4). As such, salvation in Plotinus generally involved the impulse to raise oneself back to one's spiritual home while longing for beauty or the Good, an impulse inherent in human nature which was the result of the exuberant expansiveness of the One. The power to return to higher realms was in itself a gift of the procession from the One.⁶¹

At the heart of Plotinus' philosophy, absolute truth could not be identified with anything which was recognizable here in the human world with the physical senses. This was not absolutely the case for Augustine. The eternal *Verbum Dei* manifested externally in world history as a real person with a temporal human nature with whom humans could personally identify. The Scriptures, where this was transmitted, also played a major role in Augustine's epistemology (a major point in the upcoming Chapter 7). The personal element was intensified by the confessions of sins to Christ who in turn absolved them. In *Civ. Dei* v.20, Augustine claimed that the Platonists worshipped God. Plotinus

60 *Enn.* v1.7.23.1–5. See also *Enn.* v.3.17.15–end.

61 *Enn.* v1.7.31; Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, 181. A few paragraphs before this, Rist contrasts Plotinus' conception of self-redemption with Christian grace (p. 180) as many researchers do. [See i.e., J. Trouillard, 'Procession néoplatonicienne et création judéo-chrétienne', in: J. Bonnamour (ed.) *Néoplatonisme, Mélanges offerts à Jean Trouillard, Les cahiers de Fontenay*, 19, March 1981, 1–30.] Yet such a strong contrast is difficult to uphold, as Rist demonstrates here. For this reason, in this study, Augustine's doctrine of grace is not regarded as a stark difference to Plotinus' own conception of salvation and a comparison of such will not be carried out here, although this point is an interesting subject for a future study.

did indeed pray to the gods in the *Enneads*,⁶² yet he did not mean that the Νοῦς would play a direct or explicit salvific role for the individual λόγος/νοῦς.

Plotinus did not panegyryze the Hypostases, although he did underline their excellence and magnificence, of, for example, the Νοῦς' penultimate perfection and beauty which inspired reverence and awe—as demonstrated in the treatises mentioned above. All in all, the personal relationship in Augustine's doctrines was much more pronounced and extensively applied than in Plotinus' doctrine of the Νοῦς or Λόγος. Rist's remarks: 'Plotinus never speaks of the One's love for the creation or love for the humanity.' Hereby Rist correctly deems all the seemingly personal elements in the Plotinus' depiction of the Godhead as metaphors. Admittedly, there are indeed a few passages in *Enn.*, which contradict Rist's statement. An example is *Enn.* VI.7.22.19–20 where Plotinus writes that the One gives undiminishing love to all which is beneath it.⁶³ Yet in spite of all the subtleties mentioned here, I consider the subject of the personal and human dimension a major point of difference between Augustine's and Plotinus' conceptions of the Godhead. This topic will return repeatedly in the upcoming chapters, as it was even more explicit in the theme love. In Augustine's case, human personal relations played a significant role in one's relationship with God.

3.2 *Hierarchical–Vertical versus Equal–Horizontal*

The most obvious distinction between Plotinus' and Augustine's view of the Godhead was the fact that Plotinus' Hypostases were hierarchically ordered in a strictly vertical direction; the three Persons in Augustine's triune Godhead were completely equal thus ordered horizontally.⁶⁴ An important difference to note here is that Augustine did not posit any differentiation in the realm of the divine. The divine constituted in itself an immaterial triune unity; the divine Persons in Augustine's triune Godhead were unambiguously equal, which even extended so far as to include Christ's physical Incarnation which did not result in a sacrifice of his divine nature.

In Plotinus, the verticality of the Godhead was also reflected in his doctrine of the ascent of the human soul. The soul became actualized by uniting with the divine Intellect, of which it is an image. In imitation of the Intellect, it longed to rise further vertically to the One. Its actualization and unification with the highest principle was realized only by becoming one with the Intellect and imi-

62 E.g., *Enn.* III.7.11.8, IV.9.4.6; V.1.6.9; V.8.9.13.

63 *Augustine Deformed*, 70–71. Here Rist discusses the impersonal character of the notion of "Ἐρως in Plotinus and Plato in contrast to Augustine's doctrine of love.

64 See Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 15.

tating the *Noûs*, as when the latter came into existence. This was reflected in Plotinus' epistemology—and in Augustine's as well—which will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

For the sake of doing justice to this topic, it is of interest to point out that Augustine's account of the ascent of the human image to God maintained a consistent verticality as well. This is a point which even Brachtendorf neglected in his study.⁶⁵ Ayres as well seems to overlook the verticality in Augustine's epistemological ascent: 'Augustine's understanding in some ways takes place in a "flattened" intellectual universe, there being no place for the intellectual hierarchy of Neoplatonism ...'.⁶⁶

However, Augustine's depiction of the ascent by contemplation mirrored the same vertical orientation as that of Plotinus: starting from the sense level, progressing through the soul and to the highest level of the rational soul, the intellect, where it encountered God's illumination. The human image of God, the *imago Trinitatis*, was actualized by rising to and resembling the second Person, the Word of God, Christ, and most tangibly, by imitating his worldly physical existence.⁶⁷ His life on earth was a demonstration of how humans could resurrect to immortality and become godlike.

In both Augustine's and Plotinus' doctrines, the Godhead was depicted as both intelligible to some extent, but then to a greater extent incomprehensible. Thus the relevance of the difference in verticality vs. horizontality and hierarchical vs. equality of the Godhead in my view does not represent such a large difference which it might seem at first sight. However, this point will continue to be meaningful when we examine more closely how the intellect images the Triune Godhead in ascending in the doctrines of both thinkers. But will this make a difference on their views on the divinity of the soul? This point will be considered again in the context of the intellect-image (Chapter 7) and of the ascent (Chapter 9).

3.3 *The Relationship between God and the World: Creator and Creature*

The subsection 'Divine Mediation' dealt with the correspondences between Augustine's *Verbum* and Plotinus' *Λόγος*: both thinkers posited the necessity of divine mediation between divine and material realities in similar ways. The ontological distinctions between two worlds in Plotinus' philosophy discussed in Chapter 3.2, were as follows: the divine as transcendent and immaterial, as eternal and immutable; the material realm as temporal and changeable.

65 Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 15.

66 Ayres, 'Discipline, Self-Knowledge', 285.

67 Especially in Chapter 5 sections 2.5 and 4.

These were identical in Augustine's cosmology (Chapter 4.2.2). Augustine commended the Platonists in *Civ. Dei* VIII.6 and x.2 for their distinguishing the created world from the Creator, as if their thinking on this matter was on the same line as Christians. Rist's comment seems to endorse this: '... the gulf between creature and Creator in the Christian conception (of love) ... is also present in Neo-Platonism between the One and others ...'⁶⁸

However, this study has shown that Plotinus' differentiations between divine and material reality were not always clear. Recalling Plotinus' cosmology in Chapter 3 (sections 2 and 3), when the world came into existence, the eternal Forms were transferred down to the regions of the last hypostatic level, the divine Soul, and finally to matter as εἶδωλα. Matter in itself was a product of the divine Soul-Nature. The boundary between the lowest end of the Soul-Nature and the natural, physical world in Plotinus' cosmology was not well defined. Another point of even greater significance involved Plotinus' insistence that whatever pertained to the Νοῦς remained always in the region of the Intellect. Yet he often neglected to mention the boundaries between the human νοῦς, which belonged to the visual, changeable world, and the divine Νοῦς. In Chapter 3 sections 3 and 4, this question required extensive laboring before Plotinus' standpoint could be formulated in a satisfying way.

This study has additionally shown that although Augustine made some of the same distinctions as Plotinus, he differentiated the divine and material realities more explicitly and sharply.⁶⁹ For example, in Augustine's cosmology (Chapter 4.2.4), he depicted the creation act beginning with an initial phase, the realization of the intelligible cosmos in eternity and all in one instant (the material cosmos being realized later by the *rationes seminales* in the dimension of time). The first result of the creation act was the angelic realm of the *caelum caeli*, which bore many traits of Plotinus' Νοῦς, as a region of pure Intellect. However Augustine made it clear that the *caelum* did not exist on the same level as the eternal Ideas in the *Verbum*; it was a level below in the created,

68 Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, 80.

69 Augustine may have explicated the demarcation line between the Creator and creature better than Plotinus, yet this does not mean that he explained *everything* better than Plotinus. Compared to the Neo-Platonist, Augustine failed to give an adequate explanation of how material images (particular objects of the archetypes) were effectuated by the *Rationes*. Nor did he explain the relationship between the material images in memory and the *Rationes*, to the extent Plotinus did, who did so in terms of discursive thought, which coincided with the activities of the λόγοι. For the latter, Augustine employed, for example, the all-encompassing term *cogitatio*. Unlike Plotinus, Augustine was also hesitant to make conclusive statements on how the soul and its body came together and on the pre-existence of the soul. (See Chapter 4.1 and 2 on *Gen. litt.* ix and x.)

non-divine realm.⁷⁰ It was nonetheless an eternal, immaterial region, where both the human soul and intelligible matter originated. As such, Augustine not only distinguished the immaterial from the material as Plotinus, he was usually quick to point out the difference between the divine and the non-divine. In his doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* this was also evident: the Being in the Creator contrasted with the being of the highest of its immaterial offspring—the human intellect (Chapter 4.2). Therefore I propose the following hypothesis: the differences in which both thinkers delineated their cosmologies had a direct effect on the way they delineated the status of the human soul-intellect: divine or not divine. The discussion of this thesis will be continued in the upcoming Chapter 7 on the intellect-image and then resolved in Chapter 10, in the synthesis.

4 Synthesis and Conclusions

A great many similarities have been noted here between Augustine and Plotinus regarding their conceptions of the Godhead. What can be determined as the most salient differences? As we saw above, the verticality and hierarchical ordering of Plotinus' Hypostases did not serve as any hindrance whatsoever for Augustine to appropriate even generously significant aspects from Plotinus' triune Godhead. Recalling Chapter 2.3.2, Augustine commended the Platonists and particularly Plotinus for their acute and accurate understanding of God. We have just seen that his appreciation also included Plotinus' conception of the One, the characteristics of the Intellect and Λόγος, as well as the depiction of the relationship between the Intellect and the One. Thus evaluating the comparison of the Godhead between the two thinkers, the aspect of verticality *vs.* horizontality shall from now on be characterized as a 'gray area', as an aspect with diminished relevance in light of the many similarities. Therefore it will not carry much weight in the final conclusions.

By saying this, I am arguing against Brachtendorf's position that Augustine would have found Plotinus' conception of the Godhead uninteresting on account of the hierarchical verticality and because these factors were contrary to the Nicaean doctrine of the Trinity (note 48). Yet Brachtendorf did supply us with some sharp insights into the differences between the Godhead of Augustine and Plotinus, which we can deem as marked distinctions. They included

⁷⁰ Could Augustine's description of this region of heaven (e.g., *Conf.* XII–XIII and *Gen. litt.* I–IV) have been inspired by Plotinus' description of heaven in *Enn.* v.8.4 *On Intelligible Beauty*?

two points: that (i.) Augustine portrayed the mutual penetration of the divine persons with a much compacter cohesion than the three Hypostases of Plotinus; and (ii.) that the intelligible world or *Rationes aeternae* as depicted by Augustine, lacked the explicit cohesion with the second Person, as illustrated in Plotinus' second Hypostasis in which its unity was effectuated by its self-knowledge. The last point possibly indicates a lack of interest on Augustine's part to elaborate the relationship of unity to multiplicity to the extent which Plotinus did. Perhaps he did not consider it such a high priority, as this was already explained well enough by Plotinus and as he often did, he assumed it to be understood by his readership. These three points however have less significance for the inquiries of this study, as we are aiming for the analytic results concerning the image of God-intellect. The two differences which carry the most weight for the conclusions of this investigation are: (i.) Augustine's personal factor in the Godhead: the human incarnation of the second Person and his personal and direct relationship with humans, and (ii.) his more insistent differentiation between the Creator and the creature.

Augustine and Plotinus on the Image-Intellect and Epistemology

1 Introduction

In *Civ. Dei* VIII.5–6, Augustine commended the Platonists for their conception of the immaterial soul, the rational soul, and their understanding that thinking was an immaterial activity, as well as it being an image of something immaterial. This chapter will test the accuracy of these observations and in turn demonstrate Augustine's indebtedness to Plotinus for his epistemology. Their characterizations of the human intellect will receive detailed attention here. However it must be noted that the notion of the intellect and the epistemology pertaining to it, are only truly complete after treating the topics of love and the ascent. The main theme of this section—the conception of the human image of God as intellect in both thinkers—is essential for the two final inquiries of this study. The general similarities in image-intellect here are fairly unproblematic. Although there is much consensus here in Augustinian-Plotinian research regarding Augustine's indebtedness to Plotinus' epistemology, this study will make a number of important corrections. The treatment of the material here is unique in that all the various corresponding aspects of the theory of knowledge of both thinkers are brought together, examined and evaluated. As a result, this study provides a sharper focus and more extensive consideration of the influence of Plotinus and the most significant differences.

This chapter will focus on specific elements in the epistemologies of the two thinkers which were responsible for imaging on the level of the intellect and acquiring knowledge. It will start off with a review of the general definition of image and intellect. More specific points of agreement will be treated in more detail in section 2. The major differences here will be discussed in section 3 and will be followed up by a synthesis in section 4.

1.1 *Definition of Image and Imaging*

There are few studies which extensively compare the process of imaging in the cosmologies of both Augustine and Plotinus.¹ Hence, the comparison below

¹ See Chapter 1, section 4.4 which provides an account of the state of research on this subject.

can be considered a further development in the research on this topic. For these upcoming recapitulations, we will return to the sections in this study where the themes 'the image' and 'imaging' were treated.² In the cosmologies of both thinkers, the theme imaging was an underlying motif, even though neither Augustine or Plotinus devoted a particular treatise or chapter of a work to this theme. Like Plotinus, Augustine utilized the term image to designate something which resembled that what it images but was not a direct copy and was thus inferior to its model. Material things were images of eternal Ideas. Immaterial concepts were images of divine archetypal Ideas, such as Justice or the Good.

A minor difference which could be pointed out here, is that in Plotinus, the terms which translate to English as 'image' applied to all kinds of things, whether they were material images of Ideas (generally an εἰδωλον) or beings who were images of higher divine entities (for example, an εἰκὼν or a trace ἵχνος). Hence the signification of this term had a variety of applications and usages. On the other hand, Augustine seldom applied the term *imago* to sheer material objects. Instead he illustrated their character as particulars of Ideas (as *singula* in *De Ideis*), implying that a thing was a reflection of an ideal archetype. In *Trin.*, he utilized basically the same conception of 'image' as Plotinus' εἰδωλα or ἵχνη with the Latin terminology of *vestigia* or 'traces' of the divine.³ He also referred to physical images which were perceived by the human eye in corporeal vision.⁴ Augustine's term *imagines* referred to an essentially spiritual, mental phenomenon: pictures derived from sense perception in the imagination or memory. They were also designated as *phantasiai* = recollections in the memory or *phantasmata*⁵ = fabricated pictures by the imagination. These terms were obviously of Greek origin and employed as well by Plotinus, likewise referring to the temporal and transient images in the human psyche. Augustine explicitly distinguished all these kinds of 'images' from the image of God. Only the rational soul or the intellect could be truly considered an 'image', because of its capacity to consciously become a more perfect image of God, like Christ, the Perfect Image. Its potential to become immortal stood in contrast to all the other kinds of images which were of a transient nature. Furthermore,

2 For Plotinus: Chapter 3.2: 'Imaging in Plotinus' Theogony and Cosmology' and 'A Short Prelude on Augustine's Doctrine of Creation and Imaging'. Augustine's theory of imaging was dealt with in Chapter 4, in the framework of his doctrine of creation in *Gen. litt.*, in section 2.

3 E.g., *Trin.* VI.10.12; XII.5.5; treated in Chapter 5.3.8.5: 'Sense Perception and Material Images'.

4 The first and lowest of the 'three visions', such as in *Gen. litt.* XII.9.20, 11.22 and throughout *Trin.* XI.

5 In *Gen. litt.*, e.g., XII.6–11 (and throughout book XII concerning spiritual visions); and i.e., *Trin.* VIII.5.8, IX.6.10, X.2.4 and XI.3.6, 4.7, 5.8 and 10.17.

he stated, the image of God in mankind was the highest form of all of creation, yet just below the angels.⁶ Plotinus called the human intellect an image of the Hypostasis Intellect and demonstrated that it was only the human intellect which could rise above this world and return to God. Common to the teachings of both, it was only the intellect, the highest part of the soul which had the potential to become illuminated and unified with the divine entity which it reflected. It continuously perfected itself, yet would never become equal to that which it imitated.

In Plotinus' philosophy, this region of the soul which most resembled God and could become an image in unison with the Intellect was designated with the term νοῦς. Augustine used various terms to circumscribe the image of God as intellect. In *Gen. litt.*, he referred to it as the rational soul, corresponding to the same in *De Ideis*. This part of the mind *mens* was also the *intellectus*. In *Gen. litt.*, he designated the individual soul (*anima, animus*) by the term *ratio*, which likewise globally referred to the rational soul or the image of God.⁷ Thus Augustine's epistemology began in *Gen. litt.*, founded on the conception of the *mens, intellectus* as the image of God in its capacity to obtain divine knowledge. In *Trin.*, he constructed his doctrine onto this framework and brought significant differentiations into his terminology of the rational soul in order to sharpen his definition. This resulted in an epistemology resembling that of Plotinus'. This will be given here in short and schematic form, as these points will be treated in more detail in the upcoming subsections. Plotinus designated the individual soul as a λόγος; the rational soul, the λογιστικόν, the latter of which comprised the regions of the λόγος and the νοῦς.⁸ The λόγος or self-consciousness involved the capacity to process sense data from the environment. Its mode of cognition was discursive and served as a middle point between sense perception and the higher understanding of the intellect.

In Augustine's later development of the image of God in *Trin.*,—in his analysis of the trinitarian human mind, he distinguished two regions in the rational soul;⁹ the lower from the higher mind, *ratio inferior* and *superior*, to which two kinds of knowledge, *scientia* and *sapientia* and two kinds of self-knowledge corresponded. Augustine's *ratio*, in designating the individual human soul, was equivalent to Plotinus' λόγος. Furthermore, Augustine's *ratio/intellectus* cor-

6 *Gen. litt.* III.20.30–32.

7 E.g., *Gen. litt.* VI.9.16, 14.25, 19.30 and VII.22.32.

8 Treated in Chapter 3.3. The soul as λόγος: *Enn.* e.g., IV.3.5.10–end and IV.3.8.17–20. The differentiations of the faculties διανοητικόν and νόησις are treated extensively in *Enn.* v.3 and throughout the *Enneads*.

9 Treated in Chapter 5.3.8; and throughout *Trin.* XII and XIII.

responded exactly to Plotinus' λόγος/νοῦς. The image of God is for both the intellect; for Augustine, characterized by the *ratio superior*, *sapientia* and *se nosse* which entailed an immediate, intuitive self-awareness.¹⁰ Additionally, both thinkers distinguished between different selves in the rational soul, advocating the gradual minimization of the lower in order to become the higher, more pure one, which was necessary in order to know God.

As shown in Chapter 6.3 on the Godhead, the teachings of both thinkers proposed a special relationship of the human image of God-intellect with the second divine Person or Hypostasis. In both theological systems, the second divine Person had a close relationship with its 'Father'-the primary divine Person or Hypostasis. In *Gen. litt.*, Augustine delineated the relationship of the intellect-image of God to the Creator, *Verbum Dei* (111.20.30). In expanding his doctrine of the image of God in *Trin.*, he demonstrated how the intellect could in some way reflect the three divine Persons with the assistance of and in imitation of the second Person, the perfect Image of the first, the Father. In doing so, his doctrine likewise came to resemble more that of Plotinus. Plotinus' delineation consisted of the human soul as image of the three regions of the All-Soul and the subsequent possibility of the soul reflecting the second Hypostasis, Intellect, on the condition that she actualized her highest region, the intellect. The soul became an image of the Intellect by imitating the relationship of the second divine Hypostasis to the first. In full actualization of the intellect, the human soul would advance further to become (if possible) an image of the One. Hence, Augustine's illustration of the imaging relationship of the intellect to the three divine Persons in *Trin.*, was likely inspired by the Plotinian model of imaging in the soul. Yet his method and strategy of demonstrating the imaging with triads differed considerably from that of Plotinus. These aspects of imaging will return to the analysis in section 3 'Differences'. As a last note, it is of interest to point out that in Plotinus' philosophy no perfect image of the model existed. Augustine gave one example of a perfect image: the Son of God, the Creator-Word Christ, who was equal to the Father.¹¹

10 *Se nosse* was treated in Chapter 5.3.8.4: it is a term designating a higher form of self-knowledge from *Trin.* x.4.6, contrasted by *cogitatio sui*, self-knowledge by discursive thinking.

11 Augustine did in fact speak of perfect imaging in the context of inner truth and self-knowledge, in the sense that the *verbum* was a perfect image of the *mens* (*Trin.* ix.11.16). This construction was utilized to create a parallel to the *Verbum Dei* being a perfect image of God the Father. However it was clear in this context that Augustine did not mean that the human *verbum* possessed perfect universal or divine knowledge. 'Perfect imaging' here was merely relative to the content of the human mind.

1.2 *Definition of the Term 'Intellect'*

Now we will proceed to the common characteristics in Augustine's doctrine of *imago Dei/Trinitatis* and in Plotinus' doctrine of the intellect-image,¹² starting with the most general ones. The intellect was the most illuminated part of the mind, turned upwards to contemplate its divine source. This consisted of a rise in consciousness from ordinary, discursive thinking in order to grasp the upper intelligible regions of divine reality. Both doctrines of intellect were consequently strongly allied to a specific theology. The most important similarity the intellect shared with God and the divine was its sheer immateriality.¹³ This aspect contrasted with the normal, daily mode of awareness which thrived on intramental pictures from the exterior material world.¹⁴ Although Augustine accentuated that the image of God was an image of the human Incarnation of the *Verbum Dei*,¹⁵ he nonetheless maintained that the image of God was unphysical. For both thinkers, the intellect was the only region in the soul where participation with God was possible. The intellect possessed the immediate capacity to contemplate itself, the Ideas of God, the second Person in which the Ideas existed or the whole triune Godhead.¹⁶ The activity of contemplating the Ideas in both thinkers was constitutive of the ascent to God.

The intellect for both thinkers was thus characterized by its contemplative activity which related to intellectual vision. Contemplation in intellectual vision entailed a temporary removal from corporeality and the material world: it was what endowed the image of God with a certain 'otherworldliness' as it was directed to the higher world of the divine.¹⁷ The intellect was a state of mind which involved intuitive, immediate and sometimes extraordinary divine vision.¹⁸ The notion of the immateriality of the intellect demanded that it only

12 These were introduced in Chapter 3.3: 'The Human Soul as Image'; Chapter 4.3.2.1: '*Imago Dei* as Intellect'; Chapter 5.1.2: 'The Treatment of *Imago Dei* in *De Trinitate* Compared to *De genesi ad litteram*'; and in Chapter 5.3.8.8: 'Synthesis: the *Imago Trinitatis*: Intellect and Epistemology'.

13 E.g., Plotinus: *Enn.* I.2.3.19; Augustine: *Gen. litt.* III.20.30, *Trin. i.e.*, VII.6.10–VIII.2.3; XII.7.10.

14 Augustine: *Gen. litt.* III.20.30, *Trin. i.e.*, I.1.3; Plotinus: *Enn. i.e.*, II.9.2.

15 E.g., *Trin.* VII.3.5; Treated in Chapter 5.2.5: 'The Son (Word) Christ as Perfect Image of the Father'.

16 Treated in: Plotinus–Chapter 3.4: 'Ascent'; Augustine: Chapter 4.4.

17 A good example of 'otherworldliness' in Plotinus: *Enn.* I.8.6.10–13.

18 These characteristics are well integrated into both Plotinus' and Augustine's doctrines. It is difficult to supply references to passages or even a chapter in the primary sources where all aspects are mentioned together. Plotinus: Chapter 3.3.3: 'The Rational Soul: Λογιστικόν, Λόγος and Νοῦς'; Augustine: Chapter 4.4.3: 'Characteristics of *visio intellectualis*'; *Gen. litt.* XII.6.15, et al.; Chapter 5.3.3: 'A Prelude to the Study of Triads in the *Imago Trinitatis* (*De Trinitate VII–VIII*)'; Chapter 5.3.8.2: 'Self-Knowledge (Books VIII–X)'; and Chapter 5.3.8.8: 'Synthesis ...'.

be involved with immaterial substances or non-representational content. The soul desired a progressive actualization of its intellect. In order to unfold its true potential, it was necessary for the soul to consciously differentiate between its state of mind *intellectus* or νοῦς and the discursive mode of thinking, the historical self of the *ratio* or λόγος. These topics will be studied in more detail below. The intellect on the other hand obtained universal or divine knowledge by its receptivity to the Light from the invisible and transcendent world of the Godhead. The activities of understanding and acquiring knowledge of God in Augustine and Plotinus led to redemption. These also involved the assimilation of a new consciousness that is not founded upon worldly experience, but on inner contemplation of the divine. The new self was engaged in a growing relationship with God on its journey of progressively resembling the Being which it imaged.

2 Epistemology: Similarities

2.1 Introduction

With the basic similarities of image and intellect of both thinkers in mind, we can proceed to a more profound comparison. As in Chapter 6 on the Godhead, it is more practical to review all the similarities first, then treat the differences in a broader context. This section will begin with the material in *Gen. litt.* (from Chapter 4.3) and then proceed to *Trin.* (Chapter 5.3). We will begin with the topic of contemplation—in which elements of Plotinus' θεωρία will be highlighted in Augustine's depiction of *conversio, illuminatio and formatio* from *Gen. litt.* 111.20–31. Augustine's theory of intellectual vision and the characteristics of the intellect will then be discussed alongside their Plotinian counterparts, which will include how the intellect is equivalent to its own knowledge. Following this, we will examine the phenomenon of love and knowledge fused in the intellect and the differentiated types of self-knowledge. The final subsection will deal with the conception of a lower and higher mind, conveying the way in which the soul acquires different types of knowledge and represents various kinds of 'selves'.

2.2 Contemplation

The first mention of contemplation in the context of Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei* in this study was in *Gen. litt.* 111.20,30–31. There Augustine illustrated the movement of *conversio-illuminatio-formatio* of the pure beings of light and intellect in the heavenly realm, the *caelum caeli*. Human souls inherently possessed the same formation process as the angels, by virtue of the origin

of the human soul in that realm. This potential had thus been instilled in the human soul at its creation. The formation process of the angels was as follows:¹⁹ by being called back to the Creator by the Word himself, the angels turned (*conversio*) to the Light of their source to contemplate Him. In this illumination, they were able to 'see' thereby acquiring divine knowledge, their perfection or formation. This consisted of two important aspects: (i.) the awareness that the origin and cause of the world was a Divine Creator, and (ii.) the knowledge of the Ideas in the *mens divina*, or the intelligence by which the world was made, by having witnessed and contemplated the creation act themselves (*Gen. litt.* 11.8.16–19). Augustine's account of *conversio-illuminatio-formatio* here assumed the proper functioning of the will, which facilitated obtaining divine knowledge.²⁰ As such, the angels' perfect contemplation of God and the complete divine knowledge of the Ideas served as a paradigm for the human soul.

The influence of Plotinus on Augustine's doctrine of creation and on his depiction of the *caelum caeli* was illustrated in Chapter 4.²¹ It was shown there how Augustine's notion of *caelum* resembled Plotinus' depiction of the coming into existence of the Νοῦς from the One and contemplating its source.²² As the Νοῦς turned (ἐπιστροφή) to the One to contemplate his Father, it received its properties from the One (which included Light and Wisdom) which would complete its formation.²³ The contemplation of the source by turning, becoming illuminated and receiving formation was a movement repeated in the human intellect, which when turning to its source, the Νοῦς, it contemplated the intelligible world of its divine model.

Contemplation of the Ideas by the human intellect was also discussed in the context of Augustine's doctrine of creation in Chapter 4.4, initially in the essay *De Ideis-Div. qu.* 46. This essay shows much evidence of Plotinian influ-

19 *Gen. litt.* 1.3.7, 5.10, 9.15–17, 17.32; 11.8.16–19; 111.20.30–31; Chapter 4.3.2.1: '*Imago Dei* as Intellect', 4.3.2.2: 'The *Imago Dei* and the Angels', and 4.3.2.3: 'The Influence of Plotinus'.

20 *Gen. litt.* IV.23.40, 24.41 and 25.42; V.20.38; XII.35.68 and 36.69.

21 Chapter 4.3: 'The Influence of Plotinus'. Concerning the Plotinian influence on Augustine's conception of *caelum caeli*, see Solignac, '*Caelum caeli*', 592–598, who notes unambiguously the Plotinian influence of the second hypostasis Νοῦς which is affirmed by the studies of Pépin and Armstrong (592–593).

22 E.g., *Enn.* 111.8.11.20 and VI.7.35.20–28; Treated in Chapter 3.4.4.2: 'The Divine Intellect's Relationship with the One'. See also Chapter 3.2.2.2: 'The Absolute Intellect: Νοῦς' and corresponding footnotes.

23 Conversion and illumination in Plato's and Plotinus' doctrines was mentioned in *Civ. Dei* X.11. Plotinus: i.e., *Enn.* 1.2.4.15–16; V.1.7.5–6; V.2.1.9–13; V.3.8.24–25, 30–37; A. Solignac, '27. *Conversio, Formatio*', *BA* 14, 613–614; *ibidem*, 'Origine plotinienne de l'idée "conversion"', 614–617; Vannier cites *Enn.* 11.4.5.34; 111.4.1.8–11, 111.8.3.11 and 111.8.4 as sources for Augustine's *conversio* (*Creatio, conversio*, 11–14).

ence.²⁴ G. O'Daly attributes the source for Augustine's theory of Forms here to Middle-Platonism and claims: 'It is important to note that in this text Augustine believes that it is Plato's teaching that he is reporting: what he offers is Middle-Platonic *Timaeus* exegesis.'²⁵ However O'Daly seems to be unaware of Pépin's study, which shows that many expressions in *De Ideis* can easily be traced to the *Enneads*. To name a few examples: the eternal Ideas existent in the Creator—as in the intelligible world of the Intellect,²⁶ 'the mind's eye,'²⁷ Illumination of God²⁸ and the purification of the soul in order to see the Ideas. Further along, O'Daly writes: 'Neoplatonic theories of intellection and the form did not influence the structure of Augustine's theory, except in one important respect. His adaptation of the concept of hypostasis Νοῦς (Mind) to his account of the status of the angelic order and its cognition, especially in its conversion to God qua truth, becomes the model for conversion of the human mind towards truth.' (p. 195). O'Daly's comments about the influence of Plotinus on Augustine's notion of *conversio*, are of course accurate. However his position

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- 24 Pépin, 'Augustin, *Quaestio De Ideis*', 117–134. Other sources are mentioned here as well, such as certain Middle-Platonists; C. Pietsch only mentions Plato as source of Augustine ['Idea', *A-L*, vol. 3, Fasc. 5/6 (2008) 469–470]. The problem with Plato as sole source for Augustine is that one overlooks the fact that Plato's world of Ideas lie outside of the demiurge. Plotinus places them IN the demiurge, the Νοῦς. Augustine follows Plotinus by positing that the eternal principles exist in God (*the Verbum Dei*); Boland devotes a whole chapter on Plotinus, indirectly indicating the Plotinian influence on Augustine's theory of Ideas. For the essay *Div. qu. 46 De Ideis*, he discusses other sources such as Seneca and Cicero. Boland gives a summary of *Trin.*, concentrating on the theme of the contemplation of Ideas (*Ideas in God*, 49–67; 70–77); H. Meinhardt discusses the influence of Plato and Plotinus on Augustine and how Plotinus transformed Plato's theory of Ideas ['Idee']. S.E. Beyers, 'Augustine and the Philosophers', in: Mark Vessey (ed.) *A Companion to Augustine* (Chichester, 2012) 175–187, 180–184.
- 25 'Augustine and the Platonic Theory of Forms', *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987) 189–199; quote p. 193.
- 26 Pépin ('*Quaestio De Ideis*', 117–134) and Solignac believe that this aspect in Augustine could also have been from a Middle-Platonist source. A. Solignac suggests Albinus ['Analyse et sources de la Question *De Ideis*', in: *Augustinus Magister. Congrès International Augustinienne* (Paris, 1954) 307–315.] Philo has also been suggested as a source by J.A. Beckaert (*BA* 10, 726–727).
- 27 See also F. van Fleteren, '*Acies mentis*'. Van Fleteren indicates that the term *acies mentis*, 'the gaze of the mind' (LZ: which involves intellectual vision), is not only found in Plotinus, but also in Plato, Cicero, Porphyry and Marius Victorinus.
- 28 See R. Nash, 'Divine Illumination', *AttA*, 438–440 and *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington, 1969) 3–7. In the latter work, Nash points to Plotinus as the main source but also considers Plato and Porphyry; L. Schumacher, *Divine Illumination: The History and Future of Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford, 2010); *ibidem*, 'Theo-logic'.

that Augustine was not influenced by Plotinus' conception of intellection can be refuted by examining Augustine's Trinitarian epistemology as well, which we will proceed to do in the upcoming sub-sections. There are indeed important differences between Augustine's and Plotinus' theories, which will be discussed here as well.

In *Gen. litt.*, contemplating the Ideas is mentioned in III.20–31, in his exegesis of Gen. 1.26–27, in reference to the creation of angels in books I, II and IV, and especially in the latter part in book XII in the context of intellectual visions. Contemplating the Ideas is actually a process of the ascent to God and for that reason it will be treated in Chapter 9.3: 'Augustine on the Ascent'. *Visio intellectualis* constitutes an ascent as well. Because it is of such importance to Augustine's epistemology in *Trin.*, it will be treated below in detail.

2.3 *Intellectual Vision*

Augustine structuralized his conception of contemplation in his theory of three visions: corporeal, spiritual and intellectual vision from *Gen. litt.* XII. The three visions comprised an epistemological ascent which was parallel to the accounts of the epistemological ascent of Plotinus. What interests us now are the characteristics of the intellect which Augustine provided in his notion of *visio intellectualis*. The first of these were: the superiority of intellectual vision over spiritual vision (imaginary pictorial vision) and corporeal vision (sense perception).²⁹ The superiority of the intellectual vision was substantiated by its infallibility, by its capacity to judge the inferior visions and discern the truth from falsities or deception in corporeal and spiritual visions, visions which were especially susceptible to error.³⁰ These same aspects were indicative of Plotinus' divine Νοῦς and human νοῦς. In the hypostasis Νοῦς, the grasping of truth (itself: the Ideas) was perfect and immediate. For the human νοῦς, the judgment of material images in discerning their resemblance to their exemplar was derived from the sight of the Idea or Ideas, the object of contemplation and criteria (*Enn.* V.3.10–11, etc.). Intellectual vision according to Plotinus explicitly entailed the capacity to contemplate with a more complete understanding of the Ideas. It is evident here that Plotinus' conception of intellection was well-nigh equivalent to Augustine's notion of the perfect intellectual vision which was the constant activity of the angels. Their knowledge acquired from the *Verbum Dei* in the first phase of the creation act was non-inferential, intuitive and immediate: a simultaneous grasp of the whole of reality.³¹ These characteristics

29 *Gen. litt.* XII.11.22, 24.51.

30 *Ibidem*, XII.14.29 and 30; XII.5.13; XII.24.50.

31 *Gen. litt.* IV.28–45–33.51.

pertained to both Plotinus' and Augustine's intellectual vision, the experience of such on the human level. Another aspect of Augustine's notion of intellectual vision was that it was impenetrable by demons or evil (*Gen. litt.* XII.17.34).³² Yet this aspect, as well as the aspect of infallibility (*Gen. litt.* XII.14.29), corresponded more precisely to Plotinus' view of intellect, which was not only infallible but sinless, because of its absence of material images and its orientation to true, divine reality. Another characteristic of Augustine's *visio intellectualis* was its potential for visions of God and beatitude as was incorporated in Plotinus' depiction as well, for instance in the intellect's vision of the awesome beauty of the intelligible world.³³ For Augustine, intellectual vision entailed the deeper understanding of all other modes of perception and as such grasped their true significance. The consciousness of Plotinus' intellect was likewise. It included the qualifications of being non-propositional, non-representational and in some cases, non-temporal (*Enn.* IV.7.10).

As regards the issue of Augustine's source, the following aspect of intellectual vision is particularly revealing: *intellectualis* is equivalent to *intelligibilis*.³⁴ Intellectual vision or the intellect itself bore an inseparable affinity to the perception and understanding of the intelligible Ideas. This aspect demonstrates clear correspondences to Plotinus' often depicted phenomenon at the level of the divine Intellect: its self-knowledge obtained by contemplating its own Ideas, the perfect union with its intelligibles, in which the knower and known, the subject and its object, as well as the seer and the seen were one and equal.

AUGUSTINE: But the intellectual type of vision, which is proper to the mind, is on a higher plane. The word "intellect" so far as I know, cannot be used in a wide variety of meanings, such as we found in the case of the word "spirit". But whether we say "intellectual" or "intelligible", we mean one and the same thing, though some have wished to make a distinction between the two, designating as intelligible that reality which can be perceived by the intellect alone, and as intellectual the mind which understands. But whether there exists any being perceivable by the intellect alone but not itself endowed with intellect—this is a large and difficult question. On the other hand, I do not believe there is anyone who either thinks or says that there exists a thing which perceives with the intellect

32 When Augustine formulated this facet of intellectual vision, he likely had his criticism of Platonist-theurgists in mind who believed in the need of benevolent demons as intermediaries who furnished their callers with spiritual, symbolic imagery (*Civ. Dei* IX.10, 17, etc.).

33 *Gen. litt.* XII.26.54 or 27.55; *Enn.* VI.7.22.1–10, etc.

34 See Chapter 4.4.3.3: 'Characteristics of the *Visio Intellectualis*' for references to other studies on Augustine's identification of the intellect with the intelligible.

and is at the same time incapable of being perceived by the intellect. For mind is not seen except by mind. Therefore, since it can be seen, it is intelligible, and since it can also see, it is intellectual, according to the distinction just mentioned. Putting aside, then, the extremely difficult question about a thing which would only be understood but not possess understanding, we here use “intellectual” and “intelligible” in the same sense.

Gen. litt. XII.10.21 (Translation: Taylor)

Plotinus’ depiction of the same theorem can be found throughout the *Enneads*. An interesting brief passage which corresponds neatly with the quote above and Augustine’s assertion of the intellect ‘seeing’ the intelligible is one in which Plotinus describes the unity of the seer and the seen in Intellect:

PLOTINUS: ... this Intellect needs to see itself, or rather to possess the seeing of itself, first because it is multiple and then because it belongs to another, and must necessarily be a seer, and a seer of that other, and its seeing is its substance; for the existence of something else is a necessary condition of seeing, if there is nothing else seeing, (it) is useless. There must, then, be more than one, that seeing must exist, and the seeing and the seen must coincide, and what is seen by itself must be a universal multiplicity.

Enn. V.3.10–17

Just as the activities of knowing and loving, seeing must have an object, because when one does not see, there is nothing to be seen and if one sees nothing, then seeing would not exist. Note that Augustine also used these kind of explorative arguments concerning knowing and loving in *Trin.* VIII–X. Plotinus maintained that the perception of material images did not achieve union with the Intellect, because these images were exterior to the *Noûs* and the Ideas were always interior. Material images were hence ‘phantoms’ of the Ideas and because they could not result in a direct unity of the knower with the known. Accordingly, these images did not produce truth.

Augustine refers to this theory in *Gen. litt.* XII.7.15: ‘The third kind of vision by which we see and understand love, embraces those objects which have no images resembling them which are not identical with them.’³⁵ Here Augustine underlines that the intellect cannot be equal to corporeal or spiritual images. Furthermore, according to Plotinus, in the *Noûs* discursive thought was not pos-

35 Translation: Taylor.

sible, seeing that this mode of thinking was likewise bound to physical images and that the domain of the Νοῦς was entirely immaterial. The human intellect will achieve a certain sense of unity with the intelligible while contemplating the Ideas as depicted in this poetic quote:

PLOTINUS: ... let the man who has stripped look at himself and believe himself to be immortal, when he looks at himself as he has come to be in the intelligible and pure. For he will see an intellect, which sees nothing perceived by the senses, none of these mortal things, but apprehends the eternal by its eternity, and all the things in the intelligible world, having become itself an intelligible universe full of light, illuminated from the truth from the Good.³⁶

Enn. IV.7.10.30–37

Pépin³⁷ discovered these correspondences particularly concentrated in two main treatises in the *Enn.*: V.3.1–9 and V.5.1–2.³⁸

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- 36 This is a fine example of Plotinus' paradoxical thinking. Does he mean here that the human intellect, as image of the Νοῦς, will attain a similar kind of self-unity which exists in the Νοῦς? Or does he mean that the human intellect will attain a glimpse of the self-unity of the Intellect by means of a momentary experience of being one with the Intellect? These questions are related to the discussions in this chapter in section 3: 'Differences'; 3.6: 'On the Divinity of the Soul (1)' and section 4.2: 'On the Divinity of the Soul (2)'. Also in Chapter 9.5.2 on the same subject.
- 37 Pépin, 'Une curieuse déclaration', 183–210. In this in-depth study on Augustine's use of *intellectualis-intelligibilis* (and other aspects of intellectual vision), Pépin analyzes texts of Augustine (i.e., *Gen. litt.* XI.10.21 and others from *Trin.* IX–X) alongside those from the *Enneads*. See also Agaësse-Solignac, BA 49, "Intellectuel" et "intelligible" (566–568). Ayres discusses the scholarly debate on Plotinus or Porphyry concerning Augustine's *intellectualis-intelligibilis* from *Gen. litt.* XI.10.21. Ayres comments: 'Little has been added since publication of this note (LZ: publication cited above from BA 49) in 1972.' *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge, 2010) 150 note 29.
- 38 The following is a brief inventory of Pépin's findings: Augustine: the evidence of intellectual knowledge, the infallibility of the intellect, the absurdity of not knowing oneself (*Trin.* IX.3.3); the immediate nature of intellectual knowledge (*Gen. litt.* XI.26.54) and self-knowledge as traits of the intellect (*Gen. litt.* XI.24.50); compared to Plotinus: (*Enn.* V.3.2.16–17, V.3.3.17–18); knowledge of oneself, Augustine: (*Trin.* X.3.5) compared to Plotinus: (*Enn.* II.9.1. and V.3.1.22–27); the co-extension of knowledge to the intellect Augustine: (*Trin.* IX.4.4. and *Gen. litt.* VII.2.1.28) to Plotinus: (*Enn.* V.3.1.5–11, V.3.5.1–14; 1.21–22; V.3.6.7–8); *intellectualis* as the equivalent to *intelligibilis*: Augustine: (*Gen. litt.* XI.10.21) to Plotinus: the reality or fiction of sense objects, indirect nature of spiritual knowledge, the necessity of judgment by the intellect (*Enn.* V.5.1, esp. 1.32–38; V.5.2; V.3.5.21–44 and II.9.1.46–47).

2.4 *Love and Knowledge Fused in the Intellect*

The collaboration of elements which Augustine deemed as the best image of God in *Trin.* VIII–X were: mind, knowledge and love, which he gradually developed to the activity of remembering God, understanding God and willing or loving God. Augustine's fusion of love and knowledge in the intellect corresponds to two general characteristics from the *Enneads*: the first is the importance of experiencing love and desire which will lead to truth and wisdom and will open up the way to God (for example in *Enn.* v.9). The second concerns knowledge and love as immaterial substances of the mind in the context of divine Being in the Νοῦς.³⁹

Yet the fusion of love and knowledge in Augustine's doctrine corresponds more specifically to Plotinus' representation of the divine Intellect's relationship with the One.⁴⁰ When the Νοῦς came into existence from the One, it was in its inchoate stage—the 'desiring Νοῦς' or 'unformed sight'. Longing to learn of its origin, it turned to contemplate the One (*Enn.* v.3.10, etc.). The Νοῦς, in love with its source, received the properties from the One which rendered the Intellect its formation. The Intellect became Being and Thought, as such, unformed sight became seeing, while contemplating itself, its own world of Ideas. Plotinus believed that the human intellect mirrored the initial development of the Intellect. In this sense, the human soul in its intellectual mode of consciousness was characterized by loving and desiring its origin. Love and desire co-existed in higher thought and knowledge. Yet in Augustine's conception of self-knowledge, the fusion of love and knowledge was more conspicuous than in Plotinus' epistemological treatises.

2.5 *Self-Knowledge*

Augustine began his exposition on self-knowledge in *Trin.* IX and X with the Socratic adage 'Know yourself'. Knowing oneself in Augustine's treatment included two modes of thinking: *se nosse* and *se cogitare*. *Se nosse*, as we recall (*Trin.* x.4.6), was an intuitive, a priori knowledge (thus pertaining to the intellect), and *se cogitare* (*Trin.* x.5.7) included the recognition of the details

39 Treated in Chapter 3.4. Ayres comments: 'One might draw parallels with Plotinus' account of the substantive existence of some "qualities" in the One (from *Enn.* 11.6.1): (*Trinity*, 295, note 50). However, Ayres might be mistaken here in assuming Plotinus' association of substance with the One. Generally Plotinus claims that the One is beyond substance.

40 On which treatises Augustine may have utilized, Ayres states: 'At *Trinity* IX.4.5, Augustine argues that knowledge and love have substantial existence in the mind while also being one. This assertion may echo Plotinus' assertion in *Enneads* v.3, that in the necessary multiplicity of self-thinking *Nous* there are a number of activities, all of which are οὐσίαι.' (*Trinity*, 295).

of one's person: the soul and body, a self-knowledge much in the same sense as *scientia*. Augustine also demonstrated in this context how self-knowledge was fused with self-love and desire: the mind's longing for self-knowledge and knowledge of God, treated with a lengthy series of contemplative exercises. The element love also played an instrumental role in the mind's approbation of (as in loving) personal individual truth (a *verbum*) and in doing so, it adhered knowledge to the mind.⁴¹

Augustine portrayed the acquisition of self-knowledge as being dependent on a relationship with God and on acquiring God's knowledge.⁴² The concept of *se nosse* in *Trin.*, bearing the characteristic of the intellect equaling its intelligible knowledge, as we have already acknowledged, corresponded to various aspects in Plotinus' notion of intellect, noted clearly in Plotinus' description of the soul's contemplation of the Ideas of the divine Intellect. Below are some examples:

AUGUSTINE: How will it see to act on the command it hears "Know thyself", if it does not know what "know" is or what "thyself" is? If however it knows both, then it knows itself ... But when the mind is told "Know thyself" it knows itself the very moment it understands what "thyself" is, and for no other reason than that it is present to itself.

Trin. x.9.12

PLOTINUS: For thinking is a fine thing for us, because the soul needs to possess intellect, and for Intellect, because its being is the same as thinking, and thinking made it; therefore this Intellect needs to keep company with thinking and to be always getting an intimate understanding of itself, ... (*Enn.* vi.7.41.18–20). Since also "Know yourself" (γνῶθι σαυτόν) is said to those who, because of their selves' multiplicity, have the business of counting themselves up and learning that they do not know all of the number and kind of things they are, or do not know any one of them, not what their ruling principle is or by what they are themselves.

Enn. vi.7.41.22–26

Here in the context of 'Know yourself', Plotinus is giving an example of what is not true self-knowledge; this corresponds to Augustine's *se cogitare*: a self-knowledge based upon material images and discursive thinking. Just as Ploti-

41 E.g., *Trin.* viii.6.9; See Chapter 5.3.8.2: 'Self-Knowledge (Books viii–x)'.

42 E.g., *Trin.* ix.6.11. See Chapter 5.3.8.2: 'Self-Knowledge (Books viii–x)'.

nus relays the vast multiplicity of the mind here which cannot be counted up and therefore cannot be true, Augustine says in *Trin.* XI.8.12 that the number of possible mental trinities involving material data recorded in the memory is practically infinite.

On a similar train of thought, both Augustine and Plotinus argued against the notion of self-knowledge of only one part of the mind (against the contentions of Sextus Empiricus).⁴³ There are a number of interesting similarities to note in the following passages:

AUGUSTINE: But where in this case does it know its knowing, if it does not know itself? (*ubi ergo nosse suum novit, si se non novit?*) Well, it knows that it knows other things, but does not know itself: thus it also knows what knowing is. How comes it then that a mind which does not know itself, knows itself knowing something else? It is not that it knows another mind knowing, but itself knowing. Therefore it knows itself (*jam se ergo novit*). And then when it seeks to know itself, it already knows itself seeking. So it already knows itself. It follows then that it simply cannot know itself, since by the very fact of knowing itself not knowing, it knows itself. (LZ: Augustine is pointing to a paradox here.) If it did not know itself not knowing, it would seek to know itself (*si autem se nescientem nesciat, non se quaerit ut sciat*). For it knows itself seeking and not knowing, while it seeks to know itself.

6. What are we to say then? That the mind knows itself (*se novit*) in part and does not know itself in part? But it is absurd to say that the whole of it does not know what it knows (*non eam totam scire quod scit*): I am not saying: 'It knows the whole' but 'What it knows, the whole of it knows.' And so when it knows, which only the whole of it can do, it knows its whole self. For it knows itself knowing something and only the whole of it can know something: so it knows the whole of itself (*scit se igitur totam*).

Trin. x.4.5–6

PLOTINUS: Does he (LZ: Intellect) then see himself with another part of himself? But in this way one would be the seer, and the other would be then seen; but this is not "self-knowledge" (*Enn.* v.3.5.1–2) ... For by thus seeing that part of himself which is the same as himself, he sees himself: for the seer does not differ in any way in reference to the seen. First of

43 Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, VII.284–286, 310–312; from Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 26–27. This topic is discussed plentifully in secondary literature.

all, the division of itself in parts is absurd: for how will it divide ... The one who sets himself on the contemplating or on the contemplated side? Then, how will the contemplator know himself in the contemplated when he has set himself on the contemplated side? For contemplating is not the contemplated. Knowing himself in this way (ἢ γνοῦς ἑαυτὸν), he will know himself as contemplated but not as contemplating; so that he will not know himself completely or as a whole; for what he saw, he saw as contemplated but not as contemplating; so he will have been seeing another, but not himself. Or perhaps he will add from himself the one who has contemplated, in order that he may have perfect knowledge of himself (αὐτὸν ἢ νενοηκώς). But if he adds the one who has contemplated, he at the same time adds what he sees.

Enn. v.3.5.6–20

In the passages above, both authors, exploring various perspectives on self-knowledge, write off the notion of self-knowledge as possible in only a part of one's intellect as absurd. Augustine utilizes the argument that 'not-knowing' is also a form of self-knowledge, while Plotinus accentuates that splitting apart the seer from the seen or the contemplator from its contemplation is untenable (ridiculing this idea by exploring its impossibility). Augustine argues that the mind can only know itself as a whole which is consistent with the same train of thought in the quotes of Plotinus above. Plotinus repeats these in the continuation of *Enn.* v.3 (5.29–end), explaining how the Intellect and the intelligible are one: 'it thinks as a whole with the whole of itself' (v.3.6.8). In Intellect, the knowing subject is equal to its object; this is perfect self-knowledge. Self-knowledge could never be perfected if the mind were truly divided.⁴⁴

There are many other examples demonstrating the correspondences in Augustine and Plotinus' conceptions of self-knowledge, such as the classic one

44 Plotinus states in the quote above, 'the division of itself in parts is absurd.' (*Enn.* v.3.5.6–20). In this chapter of *Enn.* v.3, Plotinus is speculating on how it is when the human mind becomes one with the divine Intellect. Thus he is describing here how the Intellect thinks as a paradigm for the human mind; whereas Augustine, in the quote above, is referring unmistakably to the human mind. Regarding the 'dividing' and 'undivided' Intellect in Plotinus, see Chapter 3.4.5: 'Continuation of the Discussion ...', and corresponding notes in which the passages *Enn.* v.9.9.1 and v.1.20.14 are discussed. There it was established that the term 'undivided intellect' could only apply to the divine Νοῦς and that the 'dividing intellect' to the human mind, due to the latter's inherently fragmented and temporal thought processes. Additionally, the 'dividing mind' referred to the two regions of the 'intellect' or the rational soul: the λόγος and the νοῦς. In the divine Intellect, division in itself in its act of thinking is impossible.

made famous by Descartes involving Augustine's claim in *Trin.* x.4.6, that the mere fact that we think is proof of our existence. This, in fact, originated in Plotinus: *Enn.* v.3.13,24–end, etc. But instead of dwelling on this, we will proceed further.

Researchers such as Pépin,⁴⁵ Brachtendorf, Horn,⁴⁶ Cary, Taylor⁴⁷ and Ayres⁴⁸ have recognized a clear parallel between Plotinus' theory of self-knowledge and Augustine's treatments of knowledge in *Trin.* viii–x. Scholarly literature is in general consensus concerning the influence of certain treatises of the *Enneads* to which Augustine is indebted, mainly v.1, v.3 and v.5. Because of the consensus, the correspondences between Augustine's and Plotinus' self-knowledge will not be further pursued here. The similarities are already evident enough, in light of countless examples in Augustine's *imago Dei/Trinitatis* and Plotinus' νοῦς. The table of both thinkers' epistemologies on the following page will display the correspondences more clearly. This is the fruit of this present study, which maps out the correspondences in a compiled manner and thus more clearly.

There are however a number of points in the scholarly literature which require correction. In discussing Augustine's indebtedness to Plotinus in positing that self-knowledge as a condition for the knowledge of God, Brachtendorf⁴⁹ correctly points out that this does not imply that Augustine advocates a direct and complete union of the human mind with the Ideas in the Word of God (or even with the Word of God himself) while contemplating, as was seemingly the case with Plotinus' νοῦς. However Brachtendorf claims that Augustine's *se nosse* involved more of a propositional cognition of the structure and the abilities of the human soul in general. This is not true. As I see it, self-

45 Pépin: 'Tout le monde, je présume, est aujourd'hui d'accord pour estimer que les célèbres analyses d'Augustin sur la connaissance de soi sont redevables, au moins pour une part, à la inspiration néoplatonicienne, notamment plotinienne.' ('Le tout et les parties', 105–126, 108). 'Les éditeurs de Plotin sont unanimes à observer que ce philosophe est à l'origine de différents traités du *De Trinitate*, notamment dans les livres ix–x; ils invoquent à cet égard plus qu'aucun autre, le traité plotinien v.3 (49) *Sur les hypostases qui connaissent*.' (*ibidem*, 112).

46 Brachtendorf and Horn treat the Plotinian influence of self-knowledge in these books and articulate this most clearly. Brachtendorf demonstrates these correspondences with treatise v.3: (*On the Knowing Hypostasis and that which is Beyond*). Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 24–55; C. Horn: 'Selbstbezüglichkeit', 81–103, *ibidem*, 'Augustine's Theory of Mind and Self-Knowledge: Some Fundamental Problems', in: Bermon, O'Daly, *Trinitate*, 205–219.

47 C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 127–142.

48 See notes 37 and 39.

49 *Struktur*, 37–38.

knowledge for Augustine may begin with propositional cognition as in analytical conception of one's historical self, yet it will subsequently rise to the intellect, distancing oneself from false self-images (as those in *se cogitare*) and obtaining a more universal grasp of humanity and itself through its glimpse of the Ideas and Christ's illumination. In this sense we can infer that Augustine neatly depicted a rise from *cogitatio sui* to *notitia sui*—which in turn paralleled the rise from *scientia* to *sapientia*. Therefore, as I see it, Augustine's *se nosse pur sang* cannot entail propositional knowledge. Instead it involves an immediate understanding or intuition of itself that is proper to the intellect; as when Augustine claims that the mind is immediately present to itself. This is clearly demonstrable in the quotes provided in this section.⁵⁰

Recalling Chapter 3.4.4, Plotinus depicted an intramental ascent from the λόγος to the νοῦς. Yet in contemplating the Ideas, he seemed to depict an overlap between the discursive grasping the Ideas διάνοια or διανοητικόν and the immediate, intuitive comprehension of νόησις. In this framework, Brachtendorf's second claim (that Augustine's *se nosse* entailed propositional knowledge) could in fact hold true for Plotinus. As often noted in Chapter 3, Plotinus' accounts of the human intellect having the whole intelligible cosmos at its disposal appeared too idealistic. He appeared convinced that the soul would be engaged more often with contemplating the Ideas on the level of the discursive mode of thinking, accompanied by momentary flashes of intellectual vision. Augustine's intellect in contemplation of the self and of the Ideas was in comparison more 'down to earth' and accessible than Plotinus' version, which Brachtendorf suggested in his conclusions above. This wholly had to do with Augustine's firm negation that the human soul—not even her intellect—could be divine. As such, again it seems that Plotinus' account of the contemplation of the Ideas by the human intellect agreed more with Augustine's perfect angelic vision (although Augustine clearly stated that angels were not divine).

To return to Brachtendorf's second statement regarding the self-knowledge of Augustine's *se nosse* as propositional, Pépin makes a similar erroneous estimation.⁵¹ He argues that the difference between Augustine's and Plotinus' conception of self-knowledge is that Augustine applied self-knowledge to the soul, Plotinus only to the intellect.⁵² Pépin's arguments are not feasible due to the

50 Brachtendorf corrected his perspective in 2012 when this subject was again discussed in 'Time, Memory and Selfhood', 221–233.

51 Pépin, 'Le tout et les parties', 106–108.

52 In doing so, he refers to the following chapters in *Enn.* v.3.: 1.16–17, 2.23–25, 3.14–18, 4.7–10 and 23–31.

fact that Augustine, once again, in positing *se nosse*, was dealing primarily with the intellect and not the lower rational soul in his Trinitarian exploration. Pépin too seems to fail to take into account Augustine's differentiations between *se nosse* and *se cogitare* which parallel *scientia/sapientia*.

2.6 *The Higher and Lower Levels of the Mind, Science and Wisdom; the Lower and Higher Selves*

Both Augustine and Plotinus divided the rational soul into two regions, the inferior and the superior. Knowledge was defined by both along the same lines: as two modes of thinking: Augustine: *scientia* and *sapientia*⁵³ and Plotinus: διανοητικόν and νόησις, further distinguished by the human λόγος and νοῦς, and two kinds of knowledge. Consequently both thinkers distinguished between the contemplation of the ideas by discursive reasoning and by intellectual vision in that the latter was as an immediate, intuitive grasping of truth. Let us now elaborate on this in more detail.

Augustine described higher and lower reason, *ratio superior* and *ratio inferior* in the following way: it was the task of higher reason to judge material things or internal material images according to immaterial eternal principles. This necessarily involved the contemplation of the unchangeable Ideas in the *Verbum Dei*. Lower reason managed and maintained things of matter of sense and time (*Trin.* XII.4.4). *Ratio superior* and *inferior* were as such complementary. Both were necessary for mental functioning, for acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. Trinities which Augustine found in the realm of *ratio inferior* did not attain the best imaging of the Holy Trinity. Only those in the superior of the two could qualify as pertaining to the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* (*Trin.* XII.4.4, 7.10). Augustine's differentiation of lower and higher reason generally corresponded to his two types of knowledge, *scientia* and *sapientia* (*Trin.* XII.12.17). He described these two kinds of knowledge as in a kind of marriage between contemplation and action: wisdom pertained thus to contemplation, science to action (*Trin.* XII 12.19). The differentiation of *scientia* and *sapientia* generally went along the same lines of *ratio inferior* and *superior*—as illustrated in the quote in this note.⁵⁴

53 *Trin.* XI–XIII; Chapter 5.3: 'Lower and Higher knowledge' and 'Synthesis'.

54 'If then this is the correct distinction between wisdom and knowledge, that wisdom is concerned with the intellectual cognizance of eternal things and knowledge with the rational cognizance of temporal things (*si ergo haec est sapientiae et scientiae recta distinctio, ut ad sapientiam pertinat aeternarum rerum cognitio intellectualis; ad scientiam vero, temporalium rerum cognitio rationalis*), it is not hard to decide which should be preferred and which subordinated to the other. Perhaps of course, some other distinction might be offered to

However, the limits of Augustine's definitions of *scientia* and *sapientia* were not quite so sharply defined as *ratio superior* and *inferior*. *Scientia*, also necessary for the eternal life, constituted the reason-oriented attention which dealt with the physical environment, in order to form worldly knowledge and to improve one's mind and life. Yet unlike *sapientia*, *scientia* included negative potentials, for example, acquiring knowledge for the sake of status or the distraction from God. On the other hand, *scientia* was instrumental for acquiring virtues in order to live well (*Trin.* XII.13.21). Sagacity pertaining to science was focused on worldly matters. *Sapientia* was divine knowledge acquired by the *imago Trinitatis*. Unlike *scientia*, *sapientia* was obtained from Christ *Verbum*, who was divine Wisdom. *Sapientia* obtainable for humans seemed to be the higher counterpart of the human *verbum intimum*, which in order to evolve from pure self-knowledge to universal knowledge, likewise required the assistance of the *Verbum Dei*. *Scientia* was identified with Scripture, yet understanding scripture pertained to the function of the intellect, as in intellectual vision (a fine example of this is *Gen. litt.* XII.11.22). *Sapientia* was also derived by contemplating the Ideas in the Word. In sum, the lower mind was involved with worldly knowledge based upon material images (*phantasiae*), derived by sense perception. These images, retained in the memory, were processed to knowledge (*cogitatio*). Judging them while contemplating their archetypal Forms to arrive at truth was carried out by the intellect in attaining *sapientia*.

Approximately the same differentiations were apparent in Plotinus' epistemology. 'The things which Intellect gives to the soul are near to truth; but those which the body receives are already images (εἰδωλα) and imitations.'

tell the two apart by—for there can be no doubt that they do differ, seeing that we have the apostle's teaching "To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:8). Yet even so, there is a manifest difference between the two things we have just mentioned, namely the intellectual cognizance of eternal things and rational cognizance of temporal things and no one has any hesitation about preferring the former to the latter.

So as we leave behind what belongs to outer man, and desire to climb up inward from what we have in common with beasts, before we come to the cognizance of intelligible things that are supreme and everlasting, we meet the rational cognizance of temporal things. Here too let us find some trinity if we can, just as we found one in the sensation of the body and another in the images that entered our soul or spirit through the senses, in such a way that for bodily things placed outside us which we attain with a bodily sense we have the likenesses of bodies inside impressed on the memory; and we have thought being formed from them with the will as the third element joining the two together, just as on the outside the attention of the eyes was formed, with the will again presenting it to the visible object to produce sight and joining the two together, and here too coming in itself as third element.' (*Trin.* XII.15.25).

(*Enn.* v.9.3.36–37). The individual soul-λόγος' capacity to reason (λογισμός) and to think discursively διάνοια enables an understanding of things by analysis and synthesis. Διάνοια (parallel to Augustine's term *cogitatio*) was a function which formed knowledge derived from visual images from the external world of εἶδωλα which entered the soul through sense perception αἴσθησις as representations of physical images φαντασῖαι or τύποι. They were then stored in the memory (μνήμη) (*Enn.* v.3.3). The recovery of these images committed to memory had to do with an image-making faculty (φαντασία, φαντάστικόν, φαντάζεσθαι) (*Enn.* iv.4.3) or the imagination of the rational soul. The rational soul ordered or governed the material realm by bringing these 'types' before the νοῦς in an act of judgment (κρίνειν)—by contemplating the Ideas or recollecting certain innate, archetypal intelligibles. Plotinus differentiated as such the accumulated knowledge based upon the εἶδωλα as representational and propositional and characterized by temporality. 'What then prevents pure Intellect from being in soul? ... We shall not say it (LZ: divine Intellect) belongs to soul, but we shall say that it is our intellect, being different from the reasoning part (διανοούμενου) and having gone up on high, but all the same ours, ... for this reason we use it and do not use it, but we always use discursive reason (διάνοια) and it is ours when we use it, but not ours when we do not use it.' (*Enn.* v.3.3.22–30).

Hence, according to Plotinus, contemplation of Ideas could be attained to some extent through discursive thought; the difference with νόησις was that this manner of contemplation encompassed an understanding in separate fractions, as in how one understands scientific theories and related concepts, but not the whole of the science. Plotinus also overlapped the two kinds of mode of thinking in regard to contemplating the Ideas, which sometimes made it difficult to distinguish them, (for example, throughout *Enn.* v.3). Plotinus demonstrated that the knowledge of the lower rational soul was derived from the elaboration of sense data (εἶδωλα); which differed from the immediate knowledge by means of intellectual contemplation of the true Forms (εἶδη) themselves, which constituted true reality. The Νοῦς illuminated the human intellect directly, enabling it to contemplate the Ideas. Augustine integrated these same concepts into his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis* in its encounters, affinity and relationship to the *Verbum Dei*. One point here for example which Augustine did not accept was Plato's theory of recollection, which was likewise assimilated by Plotinus, which he refuted in *Trin.* xii.15.24.

In addition, these modes of thought corresponded to a certain conception of oneself. The self in both thinkers was associated with perception and the kind of knowledge obtained. There were various 'selves' mentioned (for instance in *Enn.* v.3.4). In Plotinus these 'selves' tended to align with his conception of

different kinds of ‘images’.⁵⁵ It is significant that Plotinus’ lower self was associated with material reality and physical sense perception. This corresponded to the two lowest visions in Augustine’s theory of hierarchically disposed three visions; corporeal vision—which was sheer physical sense perception—(*Gen. litt.* XII.2.3) as well as spiritual vision (*ibidem*, XII.7.9), which involved recognizing the images from one’s worldly experience retained in the mind or the memory. As such we can deduce here that the two lower visions evidently applied to ordinary daily consciousness, which included the activity of logical, discursive or analytical thinking of the rational soul. The higher of the two visions, the intellectual, in Plotinus and Augustine, encompassed the self-consciousness removed from bodily or worldly perceptions, regarded as a true self in that it was closer and directly oriented to God. The true self was where the best imaging of God took place. For this reason it was deemed most appropriate to designate the image of God in both thinkers as a ‘consciousness’ involving not just the accumulation of true self-knowledge, but a simultaneous orientation to the divine and a capacity for higher understanding. The similarities of the main epistemological elements of both thinkers are illustrated in the table below.

The crux of the matter here was the orientation or focus—the shift from oneself to God (by means of the will) in order to advance self-development. In Augustine, the shift of the intellect’s gaze depended upon the grace of the *Verbum Dei*, just as Plotinus depicted the dependence of the νοῦς on the divine Νοῦς (*Enn.* V.1.11.13–15, etc.). However, Augustine postulated this dependence much further by formulating a doctrine of grace.⁵⁶

It was not clear whether Plotinus believed in a full actualization of the true self in this life. Considering his theory of reincarnation, it would seem plausible that he believed it would take several lives to accomplish this, although this was not specified in the *Enneads*. Augustine, on the other hand, expressed himself clearly on this point: the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* worked towards the new self in this life yet it was only through Christ’s re-formation in the afterlife that this perfected ‘image’ would be acquired.⁵⁷ In this sense, Augustine still followed Plotinus in the association of the image of God with the true self which required actualization and further evolution.

55 Plotinus: treated in Chapter 3.3; e.g., *Enn.* V.3.1 whole chapter; III.9.3, III.9.6.7–end, III.9.8.7–13. Augustine: in Chapter 4.3; *Gen. litt.* III.20–30 ‘the new man’, e.g., *Trin.* VII.6.12. I am dealing with the subject ‘self’ here in a very general way. For a more thorough treatment of both authors see e.g., Sorabji, *Self*; Remes, *Plotinus on Self*; Zwollo, ‘Prayer’, 288–294.

56 See below in ‘Differences’-‘Augustine’s Christological Orientation’. Also Chapter 9.5: ‘Gray Areas’ and 9.5.1: ‘Self-Actualization’.

57 I.e., *Gen. litt.* III.20.30; *Trin.* IV.3.5–6, VII.6.12, etc.

TABLE 2 The self, epistemology and rational soul

AUGUSTINE	PLOTINUS
Self and self-knowledge	
<i>Se cogitare</i> (<i>ratio inferior</i>)	λόγος: διάνοια, διανοητικόν
<i>Se nosse, notitia</i> (<i>ratio superior</i>) image of God: true self	νοῦς: νόησις, θεωρία; image of the divine Intellect: true self
Epistemology	
	ἐπιστήμη γνώσις (terminology undif- ferentiated)
<i>scientia</i> : knowledge of the world; temporal knowledge (faith)	opinion δόξα: διάνοια, διανοητικόν
<i>sapientia</i> : wisdom, true knowledge (of God and the Ideas)	True knowledge (of God, the Ideas) wisdom; νόησις, θεωρία
Rational soul	
<i>ratio, mens</i>	λόγος, λογιστικόν
<i>mens, intellectus</i> : image of God/ Trinity	νοῦς: image of the divine Intellect

The final discussion point here concerns Augustine's *verbum*, which was not included in the table above. In Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, a *verbum* was involved with self-knowledge in the sense of *se cogitare* and *se nosse*—the latter a more universal kind of knowledge of the mind, oriented to God in which the mind was cognizant of itself as an image of God. The mind was turned to itself.⁵⁸

58 *Trin.* VIII.9.13, IX.9.14, 11.16, XV.10, 17–18, 11–20; Treated in Chapter 5.3.8.3: 'True Knowledge ...' and 5.3.8.8: 'Synthesis: The *Imago Trinitatis*: Intellect and Epistemology'.

I have been unable to locate an equivalent concept to Augustine's *verbum* in Plotinus' philosophy. This doctrine was apparently Augustine's own invention. However, there is this salient example in *Enn.* v.3.6.24–28 regarding the self-knowledge of the human intellect. In this case, the term used is 'speaking' (λέγει) in reference to the actualized human intellect: '... that part of the soul which is in some way intellectual, since we call it discursively intelligent and by this naming indicate that it is a kind of intellect or that it has its power through and from Intellect. This therefore should know that in its own case too it comes to know what it sees and knows what it speaks (λέγει). And if it was what it speaks, then it would in this way know itself (γινώσκοι ἂν ἑαυτο).'

There are also plenty of correspondences between the *Verbum Dei* (who is equivalent to the Λόγος in the Gospel of John's prologue) and the Plotinian Λόγος.⁵⁹ Yet Augustine's notion of *verbum* does not correspond adequately to the Plotinian Λόγος in the human soul and for a number of reasons. The first is because of Augustine's claim that the *verbum* (as in *notitia sui*) is a perfect image of *mens* (*Trin.* ix.7.12). Augustine's *verbum* has more affinity with Plotinus' theorem of the intellect being equivalent to the intelligibles. This theorem pertains to the self-knowledge of the Intellect and concerns the unity of the Intellect with its Ideas (*Enn.* v.3.5 and the passages in the chapter quoted above). However, similar to Plotinus' depiction of the human intellect as image of the divine Intellect, Augustine's *verbum* in the sense of *se nosse* would be as an image of the *Verbum Dei*.

Nonetheless there are some significant correspondences to be found in the following two quotes: the first is from Plotinus on the spoken word involving intellectual activity, the second from Augustine on the *verbum*. Both reflect the relationship between the soul as image of God and its divine counterpart.

AUGUSTINE: Whoever, then, can understand the word, not only before it sounds, but even before the images of its sounds are contemplated in thought—such a word belongs to no language, of which ours is Latin—whoever, I say, can understand this, can already see through the mirror and in this enigma some likeness of the Word of whom it was said: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

Trin. xv.10.19

59 See Zwollo, 'Plotinus' Λόγος'.

PLOTINUS: As the spoken word (ἐν φωνῇ λόγος) is an imitation of that in the soul so the word in the soul is an imitation of that in something else (LZ: the divine Intellect), as the uttered word is broken up into parts as compared with that in the soul, so is that in the soul as compared with that before it (LZ.: the Intellect) which it interprets.

Enn. 1.2.3.24–33

3 Differences

3.1 Introduction

This section will discuss the following points of difference: Augustine's human mental triads; Augustine's Christological orientation; faith, Scripture and revelation; prayer; and the divinity of the soul. Following up on these, are a number of other issues of interest which will serve as synthesis of this chapter: Augustine's reception of Plotinus' epistemology and psychology and a revisiting of the discussion of the divinity of the soul. The final section provides an articulation of the conclusions thus far.

3.2 Augustine's Human Mental Triads

The question of the source of Augustine's usage of the mental triads in *Trin.* remains unresolved. This issue has been discussed in great length in a number of studies. Ayres' response summarizes the present situation of research on this topic: 'while we may seek the substantial existence of knowledge and love on the basis of his engagement with Plotinus (or Aristotle) alone, it may be that Marius Victorinus (LZ: who described a triad in the human soul which imaged the Holy Trinity) provided Augustine with an important precedent for manipulating mental triads on the basis of Trinitarian theology.'⁶⁰ Yet in his other studies, Ayres argued his conviction that the source was more likely Cicero.⁶¹ C. Tornau, on the other hand, discusses the Plotinian-Aristotelian aspects at length.⁶²

Let us first briefly summarize the main points of Augustine's triads and then look at the Plotinian similarities. In his search of the best trinities involving the *imago Trinitatis*, Augustine discovered triads within the elements knowledge and love themselves as well. These triads also reflected in some way the pro-

60 Ayres, *Trinity*, 293–296, quote: 296.

61 Ayres, *Trinity*, 308–312, 'Discipline of Self-Knowledge', 287–292.

62 'Background of Augustine's Triadic Epistemology', 251–266.

cession of the Holy Trinity. This was exemplified in Augustine's introduction of the first trinity in the human mind: the trinity of love: the lover, the beloved and becoming one in love itself (*Trin.* 1X.2.2). The relationship of the lover to the beloved was as the Father loves the Son; love itself bound the first two elements of the triad, as in the Holy Spirit bound the Father to the Son. The most exemplary triad reflecting the Trinitarian procession can be found throughout book X, where Augustine dealt with the element knowledge in the context of self-knowledge: the relationship of the knower (subject) to what is known (object), in association with the mind's self-consciousness (*memoria*) and the mind bringing forth truth (*verbum*) of itself. Self-knowledge was bound to the mind by love or will. Accordingly, Augustine drew a parallel with the knowledge which God possessed: the Father's knowledge being equal to that of the Son; the Holy Spirit, as Love, as equal and common to both (XV.13.22–16.26). Augustine then referred back to the self-knowledge of the *imago Trinitatis*, underlining the differences between the human and the divine. Another triad utilized by Augustine was Being, Understanding (Knowledge) and Life (*Trin.* XV.13.22), which not only characterized the divine but was present in the human mind as well (X.9.12).

The triad of love mentioned above as well as the triad of Being, Thought and Life also occurred in the *Enneads*, respectively in the self-love of the One and in self-knowledge of the Intellect: 'And he (I.Z: the One) that same self, is lovable and love and love of himself in that he is beautiful and from himself and in himself.'⁶³ Plotinus' triad seems to be echoed in one of Augustine's explications of triads in *Trin.* VIII.8.12 about love itself and loving: 'For when we love charity, we love her loving something, precisely because she does love something. What then, does charity love, that makes it possible for charity herself also to be loved? ... so, too, charity certainly loves itself, but unless it loves itself loving something, it does not love itself as charity.'

Plotinus rarely explicitly treated the human intellect using a triadic structure. The triad of knowledge νοῦς-νόησις-νοητόν pertained predominantly to the self-knowledge of divine Νοῦς.⁶⁴ The 'trinity' of Life-Being-Thought, the three major attributes of the divine Intellect, manifested in the Νοῦς self-relationship with its Ideas in its self-contemplation. Plotinus implied that these aspects could be reflected in the human intellect and in particular in the corresponding activities of self-contemplation, acquiring self-knowledge or divine knowledge

63 *Enn.* VI.8.15.1–5. Treated in Chapter 3.4.7. This triad is also treated in Chapter 8.2 and 3.

64 E.g., *Enn.* V.3.5.44.

(as suggested in *Enn.* v.9.10.10–13). As such, by contemplating the Ideas, the soul participated in Life, Being, Thought (and Desire) at its highest level.

Plotinus' triad of knowing νοῦς-νόησις-νοητόν, describing the self-knowledge of the divine Νοῦς, was detectable in *Trin.* ix and x in Augustine's analysis of the mind acquiring self-knowledge and also in Augustine's shorter analysis of the self-referencing in the consciousness of God the Trinity.⁶⁵ Plotinus' triad Life, Thought and Being also appeared in Augustine's analysis of the Son in *Trin.* vi.10.11–12. The triad of love (the lover, beloved and love itself), an anchor point in *Trin.* viii, was also found in *Enn.* vi.8.15.1–5 in the context of the self-love of the One. Thus, if Augustine had read much of the *Enneads*, it would not be unfeasible to claim that he (as well as Marius Victorinus) could have read these triads here, applying them—each in their own way—to the human mind. Seeing how influential Plotinus' epistemology already was on Augustine's doctrine of the image of God, this does not seem to be such a complicated issue.

Another additional point to mention here is that Augustine's use of the triad of love is an example of classical dialectic: the lover and the beloved served as two polarities resolving into love itself (*Trin.* viii.10.14, 8.12). Love itself was for Augustine simply God, as in 'God is Love'. Augustine could have found inspiration for this in Plotinus' short treatise, *On Dialectic* (*Enn.* i.3), in which descriptions of the intellect, as well as three different accounts of the ascent were expounded.⁶⁶ It is obvious that Augustine's intention was not to prove how these mental trinities follow along the lines of classical dialectic, rather how they reflect the same procession as the Holy Trinity. I would therefore assert that in *Trin.* Augustine 'bent' the classical dialectic to the Trinitarian procession.⁶⁷

To conclude, in light of the undeniably strong similarities between Augustine and Plotinus mentioned above, the fact that Plotinus did not explicitly utilize triads to describe the rational soul should not be considered as a major difference. This issue requires much deeper study which explores whether Plotinus was Augustine's sole source, or how exactly Plotinus fits into the constellation of other influences on Augustine, that is, the works of Marius Victorinus or

65 *Trin.* xv.14.23, 21.40, 23.43; *Enn.* e.g., v.3.5.

66 One of these accounts illustrated three types of persons: the musician, the lover and the philosopher; the latter two involving respectively the ascent by love and knowledge (*Enn.* i.3.2–3).

67 H.-I. Marrou treats Augustine's utilization of Platonic or Plotinian dialectic in the context of spiritual exercises. *Augustine et la fin*, 315–327, 327 note 1.

Cicero. Included in this extensive task would be examining and evaluating the claims in scholarly literature. For these reasons, this point should be deemed a gray area in this study.

3.3 *Augustine's Christological Orientation*

As Augustine emphasized in *Conf.* VII.9.13, Platonism missed the Incarnation of the second Trinitarian person who served as Redeemer. In Plotinus' philosophy, the eternal Son-Word of God was indeed present. (See Chapter 2.1.8.) In Augustine's epistemology, the Son-Word of God in his two natures played an active role: the story of his Incarnation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth as well as his active presence in his pre- and post-incarnational eternal countenance as Creator: as the Re-creator of souls and intermediary between the higher region of the human soul and God.⁶⁸ Both Augustine and Plotinus highlighted the difficulties of the human soul and the inclination towards sin and belief in illusion which formed obstacles to attaining intellectual vision. Yet Augustine resolved these problems with his Christology, as Christ continuously healed one's will, heart and sinfulness. With Christ as intermediary, a soul was able to hold her focus longer on God. Together with the Holy Spirit, Christ brought those he touched to a contemplation of God the Father and the Trinity.

In Plotinus' depictions of intellectual vision and contemplation, there was no direct divine assistance taking place, although the attractive forces of the One, Beauty and Ἔρως, combined with the compelling upward movement of the Λόγος to the Νοῦς, were indeed intramental forces which would drive the soul upwards towards the divine. The human intellect depended wholly on the divine for its anchoring in itself and for its ascent.⁶⁹ Yet the Λόγος and Ἔρως were not intermediaries in the sense that they intervened in a person's consciousness. The relationship of Christ, the Perfect Image to the human images of God, as described by Augustine, was a personal one, serving as guide in the soul's development in one's life on earth in the striving to understanding God. Augustine additionally underscored Christ's personal role in the development of the individual in his doctrine of grace.⁷⁰ (Augustine's doctrine of grace is thematically more relevant to the account of the ascent. For this reason it is included in the discussions of gray areas in Chapter 9.5.1: 'Self-actualization'. In my view, the theme of divine grace makes up a part of the personal aspect of the Godhead in Augustine in association with divine assistance and intervention.

68 As delineated in Chapter 4.2.2: 'The Creator' etc. and in *Trin.* IV (e.g., chapters 20 and 21).

69 *Enn. e.g.*, V.8.3.17, 10.23–26, 11 and 12; V.9.2.21–23, etc.

70 Fattal gives an exposition on the interaction of reason, faith, philosophy, freedom and grace in Augustine (*Plotin chez Augustine*, 37–39).

For that reason, grace will not be treated in this study as an element in itself to be compared with some parallel notion in Plotinus.)

3.4 *Faith, Scripture, Revelation*

Augustine integrated into his Plotinian epistemology the element of *intellectus fidei*.⁷¹ One needed to first embrace certain rules of faith, such as the existence of the Holy Trinity or the Incarnation of the Word, and subsequently embrace what is taught in the Scriptures, as authority by divine revelation. Through contemplation, an understanding could be attained which replaced faith, by means of, among other things, the epistemological process of becoming conscious of the divine through Christ's illumination (*Trin.* XIII.19.24).

Understanding by faith was certainly not alien to Plotinus.⁷² He used the word πίστις to designate 'assurance, belief or means of persuasion' or the verb πιστεύειν meaning to believe, trust and have confidence, or to trust in something convincing which appears true.⁷³ One passage in *Enn.* at least concerns belief of what one does not truly understand, in this case, the One, which is cited in the note below.⁷⁴ Plotinus mentions πίστις in *Enn.* I.3.3: as 'to firm confidence in the existence of the immaterial.'⁷⁵ Yet Plotinus' designation of faith

71 Treated in Chapter 5.3.8.7: 'Faith and Future Knowledge ...'; *Trin.* VIII.4.7; XII.5.8; XIII.1.2, 3.4, 2.5, 9.12, 19.24, 20.25–26; XV.1.3, 2.2, 2.4, 3, 27.49. On Augustine's notion of faith in *Trin.*: see Ayres, *Trinity*, faith in various contexts 147–170; Fattal, *Plotin chez Augustin*, 38–39; Smalbrugge, 'La nature trinitaire'; te Selle, 'Faith', 347–350.

72 Augustine quotes Plato on faith in *Trin.* IV.18.24: 'One of those men who were accounted wise among the Greeks himself said: "As eternity is to that which has originated, so truth is to faith."' Hill notes that this quote is from *Timaeus* 29c. Hill's own translation of Plato's Greek is as follows: 'As being is to becoming, so is truth to faith (belief).' Hill presumes Augustine was quoting from the translation of Cicero (*Trinity*, 175).

73 The word πίστις seems to be the root of the term epistemology, in how one comes to believe something is truth. Πίστις and πιστεύειν are used throughout the *Enneads*, not always in the sense of 'belief', but in other variations such as 'confidence'. There are too many references to list here. See Sleeman and Pollet, *Lexicon Plotinianum*, 842–843.

74 *Enn.* V.3.17.28: '... but how can one describe the absolutely simple? But it is enough if the intellect comes into contact with it; but when it has done so, while the contact lasts, it is absolutely impossible, nor has it time to speak; but it is afterwards that it is able to reason about it. One must believe one has seen, when the soul takes light; for this is from him and he is it; we must think that he is present (LZ: The One) when, like another god whom someone called to his house, he comes and brings light to us: for if he had not come, he would not have brought the light. So the unenlightened soul does not have him as a god; but when it is enlightened, it has what it has sought, and this is the soul's true end, to touch that light and see it by itself, not by another light, but by the light which is also means of seeing. It must see that light by which it is enlightened: for we do not see the sun by another light than his own. How then can this happen? Take away everything!'

75 *Enn.* I.3.3.: 'But the philosopher—he is the one who is by nature ready to respond and

is marginal compared to Augustine's extensive elaboration as the means which leads to understanding and to knowledge.⁷⁶ Nonetheless the subject of faith will be considered here a 'gray zone'.

I have been able to locate very little literature on Plotinus and the topic of faith.⁷⁷ This subject clearly requires more research. For example, not only on the usage of the term πίστις in the *Enneads* but whether other terms, expressions or concepts were employed to depict the notion of assumption or belief. Plotinus' discourse on the intelligibility of the Intellect subsumed the existence of Intellect and the One. His accounts of ascending to the Νοῦς and the One also reflected his own experiences. Thus it would be helpful to have a clear assessment to what extent Plotinus explicitly spoke of the necessity of 'making correct assumptions' as prerequisite to comprehending and apprehending truth and becoming conscious of the Intellect and One before experiencing intellectual vision.

In Augustine's extensive treatments on faith, he warned against having the wrong kind of faith, believing in something which was essentially fictitious (*Trin.* XI.1.1.3). In *Conf.* he repeatedly accused the origin myths of the Manichaeans as being based upon fantasy images (*Conf.* III.6.10, etc.), a faith which was not conducive to further insight or knowledge of God. He asserted that tenets must be substantiated by some kind of verifiable verity, which in his eyes, the Manichaean myth lacked. Faith should be anchored in a proper authority with a tradition, such as the Old and New Testament, which served as a collective revelation, not to just a certain privileged few.

Christ's life as told in the gospels⁷⁸ was for Augustine an object of contemplation, a source of wisdom and a tool for redemption. Scripture served as a kind

"winged" we may say, and in no need of separation like the others. (LZ: separation from the divine, intelligible world; the 'others' are two other examples, a musician and a lover.) He had begun to move into the higher world and is only at a loss for someone to show him the way. So he must be shown and set free, with his own good will, he who has long been free by nature. He must be given mathematical studies to train him in philosophical thought and accustom him to firm confidence in the existence of the immaterial—he will take to them easily, being naturally disposed to learning; he is by nature virtuous and must be brought to perfect his virtues, and after his mathematical studies (LZ he must be) instructed in dialectic and made a complete dialectician.' See also *Enn.* VI.5.8.1–5 concerning belief in the participation of matter with the Forms.

76 E.g., *Trin.* XI–XIII; Chapter 5.3.8.7.

77 R. Holte discusses the influence of πίστις in the *Enneads* on Augustine's notion of *fides* in an affirmative manner. *Béatitude et sagesse*, 316–317.

78 In formulating a summary of Augustine's doctrines in *Trin.*, Ayres underlines the importance of faith as related to Scripture: 'Scripture is important here, because we should read Scripture according to Augustine and have faith in the things we cannot see (= we didn't

of *scientia* in the sense that one took in this knowledge by willful, exterior concentration: for example, by reading the New Testament or hearing it preached. Noteworthy is Augustine's approach to Scripture in *Gen. litt.* XII.11.22, his explanation of the three visions illustrated by the biblical commandment 'Love your neighbor'. Here he demonstrates the understanding of Scripture through the ascent from corporeal vision (seeing the letters with sense perception), to spiritual vision (loving the neighbor internally visualized) and then by intellectual vision, 'love observed intellectually'. Here he indicates that the meaning of the text was raised to a higher level of understanding in which its true sense should be understood. In this way, the Scriptures would serve as *scientia* (as well as the source of rules of faith), to promote the deeper significance in intellectual vision, *sapientia*. Faith, too, in Christ and the Trinity was a form of *scientia*, a temporal form of knowledge which would later be replaced by understanding as in *sapientia*. Both were given by Christ as grace.

Augustine's theory of the three visions described above, reproduced faithfully a Plotinian epistemological ascent, applied to his exegetical method of scripture. It was of no coincidence that the biblical commandment, 'Love your neighbor', which he interpreted was also one of the departure points in his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, concerning the element love. The elaboration of this commandment represents one of the major differences of thought between Augustine and Plotinus. This difference will be discussed in Chapter 8.4.2 on love.

However, these two points, the scriptural context and faith before understanding, should be considered a gray area here and not a major point of difference between Augustine and Plotinus for a number of different reasons. The Old and New Testament as Holy Scripture was naturally absent in the *Enneads*. Yet the *Enneads*, in the eyes of the author himself and of many others in antiquity, including Augustine, gave a reliable exegesis of the thought of the mentor, Plato (*Civ. Dei.* IX.10). There is much to be said here on Plotinus' reverence for Plato, (for instance, calling him 'godlike'), who lived approximately 700 years earlier. It would be going too far to say that Plotinus considered the dialogues of Plato 'Holy Scripture', yet he did revere Plato as the ancient authority on truth. In this sense, the *Enneads* were in fact an exegesis of Plato's works.

Another factor of interest concerning Augustine's dependency on Holy Scripture within the context of this comparison of epistemologies, is that the

see Christ in his incarnation). ... We should seek to see what is said and done in His *Forma Servi* as drawing of our desires and intellects towards the *Forma Dei* that will remain hidden until the eschaton.' (Ayres, *Trinity*, 146).

biblical passages which Augustine employed for his doctrine of the intellect-image were indeed selective. For Augustine, it was apparently clear that certain biblical passages did not present a challenge while fusing them with Plotinian epistemology. For example in Paul (Col. 3:1), to 'put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator' can be easily reconciled with Plotinus' conception of νοῦς, in its conscious unity with the Νοῦς, becoming an image of the Intellect and the true self. Other examples include: the distinction of terms 'inner and outer man' of Paul ('Even if our outer man is decaying, the inner man is being renewed from day to day': 2 Cor. 4:16) can also be found in Plato and Plotinus.⁷⁹ Paul's mentioning of 'two kinds of knowledge' ('To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit': 1 Cor. 12:8) formed the basis of Augustine's integration of Plotinus' two kinds of knowledge or modes of thinking (*Trin.* XII.15.25). In this way, he formulated his own theory of two kinds of knowledge *scientia* and *sapientia*. John 1:1–5 could be applied to Plotinus' second hypostasis Νοῦς: 'In the beginning was the Word (Λόγος) and the Word was with God ... and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made ... In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.' (*Conf.* VII.9.13; *Gen. litt.* 1.2.6). The divine Intellect as demiurge and Wisdom could correspond to some extent to Sir. 1–8, where the Creator is depicted as Wisdom (as in Augustine's *Gen. litt.* 1.5.10). Lastly, 1 John 2:15 typifies Plotinus' philosophy perfectly: 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'

The question could be raised as to what extent these biblical passages were originally influenced by Greek philosophy or Middle-Platonism in the first place.⁸⁰ In that sense, we could confirm that Augustine's use of authoritative texts was indeed similar to Plotinus' utilization of the *corpus platonicorum*, in that it was highly selective. (Plotinus based his interpretation almost exclusively on Plato's dialogues.)

Hence Augustine accentuated that the understanding of God was accessible to us through Scripture and through Christ's illumination, both of which we could use as objects of contemplation. Although, as he admits in *Gen. litt.* 1.19.38, Scripture is not always immediately comprehensible. To tie this in with the second point of difference with Plotinus, Christ's Incarnation, the Scrip-

79 *Enn.* I.1.10.15, V.1.10.10–11; Plato: *Republic* IX.587A7; 589A7.

80 For example, on the influence of Greek philosophy (Stoicism, Middle-Platonism) on the letters of Paul: G.H. van Kooten, 'The Pauline Debate on the Cosmos: Graeco-Roman Cosmology and Jewish Eschatology in Paul and in the Pseudo-Pauline Letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians' (Dissertation, University of Leiden Netherlands, 2001).

tures, as well as the faith required to understand them, all shared the common property of being 'exterior' means (*scientia*) to coming to knowledge of God. However the assimilation of such truth remained an immaterial, intellectual activity requiring immaterial conditions: Christ's grace and Illumination. In spite of the fact that these aspects do not constitute major differences in the thought of Augustine and Plotinus, the fact that they play such a significant role in Augustine's Christology represents indeed an indisputable major distinction and changes the perspective somewhat.

3.5 *Prayer*

Many of the passages in the *Enneads* could be regarded as spiritual exercises which were important for developing the intellect and for assimilating the immaterial mode of thought.⁸¹ Augustine's epistemology included spiritual exercises and prayer, as both were integral to spiritual development. Yet considering the activity of prayer, Augustine seemed to advocate the necessity and utility of prayer (especially in other works than *Trin.*) to a greater extent than Plotinus. However this point could be debated. As of yet I have found no studies on this subject. Nonetheless, we must recognize that in Augustine the aspects of faith, revelation and the use of Scripture were bound to his doctrine of prayer. This does then point to a significant difference between his thinking and that of Plotinus.

Augustine also extended the activity of contemplation not only to spiritual exercises in order to develop the intellect, as Plotinus did, but also to prayer. The prayer at the end of the work (xv.28.51), which was the only complete prayer in *Trin.*, was nonetheless of symbolic importance for Augustine's mystagogy in *Trin.*⁸² The same focus on God necessary to lift one's mind up to God the Trinity, could be effectuated through the individual's own initiative in the activity of prayer. In praying, the will functioned properly, its brokenness was amended. Prayer was in this sense a form of conversion to God, directing one's desires to the divine, ventilating them, confessing one's sins, giving thanks and praise. Prayer reinforced the personal element of the divine by the communication with one's personal savior, Christ. The only explicit reference to genuine prayer in Plotinus was *Enn.* v.1.6.9–11: 'Let us speak of it in this way, first invoking God himself, not in spoken words, but stretching ourselves out with our soul into

81 M. Strozynski designates which treatises in *Enn.* could be considered spiritual exercises in chapter 2 of *Mystical Experience*. He quotes Rappe (*Reading Neo-Platonism*, 39) as deeming the treatises of *The Enneads* as 'meditation manuals.'

82 E.g., Zwollo, 'Prayer'.

prayer (εὐχὴν) to him, able in this way to pray alone to him alone.⁸³ Here he is asking God to assist him in reaching out to the incomprehensible One.⁸⁴

Praying for material needs was not Augustine's objective in his 'Prayer to the Holy Trinity'. There his prayer was an expression of his desire to remain attached to God and become reformed by him. It included an apology for his verbosity and an exposition on the limitation of human language to communicate truth about the nature of God. Aside from the closure of *Trin.*, Augustine penned many other prayers (*Confessions* could also be regarded as one prolonged prayer.⁸⁵) and in other texts he instructed others how one should pray.⁸⁶ In my view, Augustine's 'Prayer to the Trinity' demonstrated that the activity of prayer,—directing oneself to God—, fitted neatly into the goals of his doctrine of *imago Trinitatis*. This entailed the voluntary lifting of one's focus from oneself to God. Prayer was also for Augustine an expression of humility.

Augustine indirectly showed the importance of prayer at the end of the *Trin.*, by having composed a full-blown oration addressed to the Holy Trinity, as a sort of token of his doctrine of prayer delineated in other works. Because the element of prayer in itself did not deviate from Plotinus' thinking whatsoever, it should therefore be considered a gray area, not a major difference. Yet the fact that the emphasis on prayer is much more pronounced in Augustine's Christology, places this issue in a different light. Prayer for Augustine is a means of strengthening one's personal, individual and even collective relationship (as a member of a church community) to God. It makes up an important part of Augustine's account of the ascent and his Christology. In these contexts, prayer gains greater significance. It will be discussed again in the comparisons in the upcoming chapters on love (8) and the ascent (9).

83 Another example of prayer by Plotinus (in describing an ascent): 'Keep this, and apprehend in your mind another, taking away the mass: take away also the places, and the mental picture of matter in yourself and do not try to apprehend another sphere smaller in mass than the original one, but calling on the god who made that of which you have a mental picture, pray him to come. May he come, bringing his own universe with him, all the god with him, he who is one and all, ...' (*Enn.* v.8.9.11–16). There is another mentioning of prayer in *Enn.* iv.4.30–39, concerning calling upon the lesser deities which Plotinus regarded as magical activity. He wholly disapproved of magic and theurgy.

84 Armstrong comments: 'For the whole of Platonic philosophy as he (Plotinus) understood it, is a method of prayer in the large traditional sense of lifting up the heart and mind to God.' *Enneads* v, 29; also 'Chapter 15: The One and the Intellect', 236–249, 260.

85 Brachtendorf, *Augustins Confessiones*.

86 E.g.: *Ep.* 130.9.18 and 10.19.

3.6 *On the Divinity of the Soul (1)*

The passage below is one of many good examples from the *Enneads* in which the soul is portrayed as becoming one with Intellect and the One with ease. 'For we and what is ours go back to real being and ascend to that (1Z: Intellect) ... and we think the intelligibles; we do not have images or imprints of them. But if we do not, we are the intelligibles. If then we have a part in true knowledge, we are those; we do not apprehend them as distinct within ourselves, but we are within them. For since the others, and not only ourselves, are those, we are all those. So then, being together with all things, we are those: so then, we are all and one.' (*Enn.* VI.5.7.1–5).⁸⁷ Augustine on the other hand, consistently makes statements such as this: 'By that same token when we know God, we are indeed made better ourselves than we were before we knew him, especially when we like this knowledge and appropriately love it and it becomes a word and kind of likeness to God; yet it remains inferior to God because it is an inferior nature, our consciousness being a creature, but God the Creator.' (*Trin.* IX.11.16).⁸⁸

In this comparison, Augustine's distinction between God and humans would seem to represent a major difference in their doctrines and epistemologies. Yet both Augustine and Plotinus distinguished the human intellect from the rest of the soul, both posited that it was immaterial and the location of the image of God. However, Augustine declared unambiguously that the human soul-intellect, as creature of the Creator, could not possibly be divine and thus he made this a striking aspect in his ontology.⁸⁹ This topic has been discussed many times already, especially in Chapter 3 on Plotinus. It will be helpful to review now what has been concluded on this topic throughout this study so far. In doing so, we will be able to integrate new insights from the present section comparing the epistemology of both thinkers.

3.7 *Recapitulation*

We must begin when this question was first posed, in Chapter 2.3.3, as to why Augustine attacked the Manichaeans for their claim of the consubstantial-

87 Also: 'Since the soul is so honourable and divine a thing, be sure already that you can attain God by reason of its being of this kind, and with this as your motive ascend to him: ...' *Enn.* V.1.3.1–4. See also throughout V.1.2–3.

88 'That the soul, you see, was made by the all-powerful God, and that accordingly it is not a part of God or identical with his nature, is stated quite plainly in another passage of scripture, where the prophet says ... (... Ps. 33:15, ... Zech. 12:1)' (*Gen. adu. Man.* 8.11, translation Hill).

89 On the differentiation of creatures and Creator in Augustine: e.g.: *Gen. litt.* I.1.2, VII.6.9, VII.11.17 (a refutation of those who believe in the consubstantiality of the soul with God); *Trin.* IV.9.12, etc.

ity of the human soul with the divine (*Conf.* III.6.10) yet refrained from critique of Plotinus' explicit statements concerning the divinity of the human soul and intellect. Moreover, in *Civ. Dei* VIII.6 and x.2, Augustine mentioned in his praise of the Platonists that they, too, understood that there were significant differences between creatures and the Creator. In Chapter 3 on Plotinus,⁹⁰ we returned to this question in order to evaluate it in the context of Plotinus' psychology. There it became evident that Plotinus had indeed taken sufficient account of the differences between 'Makers and their products',⁹¹ in the sense that the divine was immaterial, pure Being, eternal and unchangeable; the material: temporal, mutable and of a lesser being. In Chapter 3.3 and 4, the issue of the status of the soul in Plotinus branched out in several directions. There we examined Plotinus' statements on the soul and intellect (which were also deemed as incorporeal—the lower soul however being connected to the physical senses), in which they were unambiguously designated as divine. Additionally, from Plotinus' cosmology it was clear that the soul and intellect were considered of divine origin.⁹² The intellect was shown to be directly and immediately connected with the divine Intellect. In certain treatises, he even

90 From Chapter 3.3.5: 'The Divinity of the Human Intellect (1)'; 3.3.7: 'The Divinity of the Intellect (2)'; 3.7.1: 'The Difficulties of the Soul, Defining the Intellect'; and in section 4.5 of the same chapter: 'Continuation of the Discussion ...' and 4.6: 'The Failure and Descent of Intellect'.

91 See Chapter 3.2.3: 'Plotinus' Ontology: the Relationship Between Two Worlds'.

92 Plotinus on the origin of the soul: see Chapter 3.2. The human soul came into existence in the following way: first, the individual intellects were divided from the divine Intellect. They were then transmitted to the Soul-Νοῦς, then to the World Soul (both of whom received them by contemplation of the Form principles). The latter split herself up into individual souls, called λόγῳι, which were joined to the form principles and the individual intellects. Then they were transmitted further downwards to join a physical body. Thus, the origin of the soul in Plotinus was unambiguously the intelligible, invisible, transcendent and divine realm.

Augustine on the other hand identified the origin of the soul in the *caelum caeli*, heaven or the angelic realm, of the beings of pure intellect; a region which was created directly by the Word of God (*Gen. litt.* III.20.30; Chapter 4.3.2.2). Augustine clarified here, given that the angels and human souls were creatures, they could not possibly be divine. Due to their lives in a physical body in the dimension of time and space, human souls, unaware of their origin and knowledge of God, were obligated to attain the knowledge of God in a gradual manner in the dimension of time and space. The human soul would only become eternal, immortal and godlike in the afterlife under the condition that the soul would be purified and prepared for it. Thus the origin of the soul in Augustine's doctrine was without question not divine.

It appears here that the way in which the two thinkers described the origin of the soul discloses the general differences in their views on the status of human soul. However, Plotinus' doctrine of soul is more nuanced than this, as the section below will demonstrate.

described the lower part of the soul as having been descended, while the intellect was undescended, always remaining in the domain of the divine intellect.⁹³ Thus, it seemed that, although Plotinus had indeed sufficiently distinguished between the divine and the material world, he failed to make the distinction clear between the human intellect and the divine Intellect.

Let us turn back a moment to Chapter 2.1.10: to Augustine's story in *Conf.* VII of how he experimented with the Platonist inward turn. There he criticized the Platonists for their lack of consideration of the weaknesses of the soul and the will in the elevation of the soul to God. Yet we saw in Chapter 3.3.6 (on 'Matter, Evil, Sin and Error') that Plotinus had certainly taken sufficient account of the weaknesses of the soul, the will, including the human propensity for sin, all of which created difficulties for the ascent.⁹⁴ In certain brief passages in the *Enneads*, statements could be found in which the difference between the νοῦς and the Νοῦς was expressed. However he failed to reconcile these with his perspective on the divinity of the soul. On the other hand, Plotinus depicted the ascent to the Intellect and the One with enormous ease, rarely or only negligibly accounting for the psychological struggles or weaknesses involved in the same context. As such, he demonstrated here an enormous optimism for the possibility of intellectual actualization.

Another problem in Plotinus' philosophy was discovered: Plotinus depicted the intellect as having an immediate connection with the divine Νοῦς, always remaining in the domain of the Intellect. Thus given that Plotinus depicted the intellect as a separate part of the soul,—undescended and differentiated from the lower, which was connected to the body—, what was the relationship between the intellect soul λόγος and intellect νοῦς in their specific modes of thinking? These inconsistencies had been identified by especially Blumenthal and Emilsson.⁹⁵

The conclusion in Chapter 3 was that Plotinus not only insufficiently delineated the human intellect's relationship to the divine Intellect, but also the relationship of the (presumably 'divine') intellect to the lower regions of the soul. My study on imaging in Plotinus' cosmology offered a partial clarification to this problem. Here an image was always inferior to its model. As such,

93 For example in *Enn.* IV.7.13.1–4. See also section 2 of this chapter, Plotinus' quote (*Enn.* V.3.5.6–20) mentioning the undivided and dividing intellect. See note 44.

94 *Conf.* VII.20–26, 9.13, 20.26. (Chapter 2.1.10.)

95 Blumenthal, 'On Soul and Intellect', 82–104; Emilsson, *Intellect*, 176–191. See Chapter 3.3.3: 'The Rational Soul Λογιστικόν: λόγος and νοῦς'; 3.3.5: 'The Divinity of the Intellect (1)'; 3.4.4.1: 'The Human Soul-λόγος Contemplating the Ideas'; and 3.4.5: 'Continuation of the Discussion ...'.

Plotinus would have assumed that the reader understood—even in his most optimistic portrayal of the ascent—that the human intellect, as image of the divine Intellect, was distinctly inferior to that what it imaged, as he mentioned in *Enn.* 1.2.7.24, 27–30, in passing as it were.

Concerning the specific relationship of the soul-λόγος to the intellect-νοῦς and how Plotinus would reconcile these two contradictory aspects of his epistemology and doctrine of Intellect, the following hypothesis was suggested: the soul-λόγος imitated the transcendent Λόγος in the Godhead, who always had an immediate contact with the transcendent Νοῦς. Thus it would appear that the human soul would be capable of being constantly in contact with the νοῦς above it, as its privilege. Excessive contact with the material temporal world on the other hand would distract it from its ultimate destination, the actualization of the intellect. Its good will would overcome this (in desiring to be good and loving the Good—the One) and thus maintain its orientation to God. Supporting this is Plotinus' statement that the λόγος,—that is, its mode of thinking (διανοητικόν)—and the particular kind of knowledge it obtained, were images of the intellect, its νόησις and truth.⁹⁶ In that sense, the potential of the soul to become intellect was always guaranteed.

Furthermore, as Brachtendorf pointed out, Plotinus expounded that most people only contemplated the Ideas while in the discursive mode of thinking: one or a few separate Ideas at a time. Thus, in my opinion, for Plotinus, flashes of intellectual vision would likely occur only occasionally; a full-blown intellectual vision of the entire intelligible world was possible, yet not frequent.⁹⁷ In conclusion, although Plotinus posited that the soul-intellect was divine, if one read further and more deeply into his doctrines, it became clear that he neutralized these claims considerably. Elsewhere in *Enn.*, there are sporadic, brief comments in which the differentiation of the human and divine Intellect is articulated. Yet these comments seem to be mentioned only in passing. We will return to this matter in Chapter 9 on the Ascent. For now we shall return to the question as to why Augustine would refrain from critique of Plotinus' explicit statements on the divinity of the soul and intellect. This will be evaluated in light of the dependence on Plotinus' epistemology on Augustine's thinking and how he received it.

96 E.g., *Enn.* v.1.3; v.3.8.8–end.

97 Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 15–19.

4 Synthesis and Conclusions

4.1 *Augustine's Reception of Plotinus' Epistemology and Psychology*

Considering the numerous correspondences between Augustine's and Plotinus' theories of knowledge, the question is now: how did Augustine adapt Plotinus' epistemology to suit his own doctrines? First of all, Augustine emphasized the gap between the creaturely soul and the divine Creator in his writing repeatedly so that it would remain unquestionable. He must have surely perceived the philosophical discrepancies created in Plotinus' thought in positing the soul or intellect as divine. By stressing the ontological differences between Creator and creature, he removed all doubt of anything human having a divine status in any way. The only exception to this was, of course, Jesus Christ.

As regards the relationship of the lower rational soul to the higher, we saw in Augustine's *se nosse* and *se cogitare* the same gray zone as Plotinus' discursive and higher contemplative thinking. *Notitia sui* was indeed oriented to the divine, yet Augustine was careful to point out that this higher mode of consciousness did not possess a total connection to the divine (see quote above-*Trin.* IX.11.16). Augustine's explanation of the differences in self-knowledge in terms of orientation (material vs. divine) (following Plotinus' view on knowledge) was clear. But the question remained, did the soul 'jump' from one consciousness to the other and if so, then how? As concluded in Chapter 3.4, Plotinus did not provide a clear response to this.

I propose that Augustine resolved this by tying the two kinds of knowledge closely together, *scientia* and *sapientia*, 'marrying them' as it were (*Trin.* XII.12.19) to the extent that the gray zones became meaningful. An example is *Trin.* XII.14.21: 'For knowledge (*scientia*) too is good within its proper limits if what blows up or tends to blow up in it is overcome by the love of eternal things, which does not blow up but builds up, as we know. Indeed without knowledge (*scientia*) one cannot have the virtues which make up for right living and by which this woeful life is so conducted that one may finally reach the truly happy life which is eternal.' This is a statement which Plotinus would not disagree with. However Augustine endowed this gray zone with profound purpose, by explicitly integrating the element of faith—faith as *scientia* or knowledge of temporal things—into his epistemology. Faith was an element which was present in Plotinus' philosophy yet was underplayed. Moreover, Augustine's view of faith encompassed, among others things, belief in the Incarnation of Christ, which was, of course, non-existent in the *Enneads*. In his epistemology, faith provided a link between *scientia* and *sapientia* (*Trin.* XIII.1.2).

Our knowledge (*scientia*) therefore is Christ, and our wisdom (*sapientia*) is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge (*scientia*) toward wisdom (*sapientia*). Without ever turning aside from the one and the same Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). But now we are speaking of knowledge; later on we are going to speak about wisdom, as far as he himself enables us to do so. Nor of course should we take these two as if we could never call this one that is concerned with human affairs wisdom or that one that is concerned with divine things knowledge, in a broader manner of speaking each can be called wisdom and each knowledge.

Trin. XIII.19.24

Implied here is that one must have faith in what one reads in the Scriptures about the life of Christ on earth (*Trin.* XIII.1–3. etc.). Because this faith is a gift to us from Christ, we should trust its veracity and attach ourselves to it in spite of its temporal character.⁹⁸ (This is a conception one would not find in the *Enneads*.) Scripture is also a form of *scientia* which will eventually lead to *sapientia* or divine knowledge. Faith however is the precursor to true understanding and therefore cannot pertain to *sapientia* (XIII.20.26). This eternal wisdom shall be given in complete eternal contemplation at the end of time, but in the meantime, while still in this life, the understanding can also be acquired progressively when the image of God receives eternal, universal knowledge in Christ's illumination (XIV.19.26) by means of intellectual vision. Besides faith, Augustine considers the virtues one acquires in this life temporal as well (*Trin.* XII.14.21), because in the next life they will no longer be required, we will no longer have to endure evil (XIV.1.3, etc.). The main point here is that Christ, as

98 Augustine shows how the sounds of the words of faith perceived by the senses operate through an outer trinity of: recollection/thinking-attention-love/will. Yet this trinity does not constitute an *imago Trinitatis*. He brings virtues into the picture as well, which are associated with faith: 'We must now bring this book to an end with the admonition that the just man lives on faith (*i.a.*, Rom. 1:17) and that this faith works through love (Gal. 5:6); in this way the virtues, too, by which one lives sagaciously, courageously, moderately and justly, are all to be related to the same faith. Otherwise they would not be true virtues. ... Whatever notions this faith and such a life produce in the consciousness of the believing man, when they are contained in the memory, and looked at in recollection, and please the will, they yield a trinity of its own kind. But the image of God, ... is not yet found in this trinity.' (*Trin.* XIII.20.26); He explains this again throughout book XIV, e.g., 2.4.

the giver of all true knowledge, lifts the soul from temporal, material knowledge to eternal and immaterial knowledge by his grace.

The final statement from Augustine's quote above is also a claim with which Plotinus would definitely concur. ('Nor of course should we take these two as if we could never call this one that is concerned with human affairs wisdom or that one that is concerned with divine things knowledge, in a broader manner of speaking each can be called wisdom and each knowledge.') The rest of the quote demonstrates that Augustine provided a better articulation of this predicament—of the gray zone—better than Plotinus. It also helped that his terminology for the two kinds of knowledge were differentiated and coherent. (As we recall, Plotinus used the terms *ἐπιστήμη* and *γνώσις* interchangeably.)

As a result, Augustine succeeded in strengthening the unity of the soul more so than Plotinus, by making it dependent upon the intervention of Christ who moved the human mind up from *scientia* to *sapientia*. Faith in Christ, faith in the content of the Scripture—all of which were *scientia*—were prerequisite to this movement.

To continue the discussion on Augustine's reception, let us pinpoint here a few more major differences in Plotinus' and Augustine's thinking. For Augustine, certain psychological factors were not elaborated explicitly enough in Plotinus' theory of knowledge. This leads us to the discussion of Augustine's treatment of the problematic human will. He devoted lengthy passages to this topic in *Conf.* VII and VII, explaining how the deficient human will hindered the ascent to God. Then in *Gen. litt.* in his exegesis of the story of Adam and Eve (Chapter 4.3.2.5–6), he demonstrated that the first two humans had instigated original sin by their defective will. As such, all of humanity inherited these defects as well. This consisted of a turning away from God's will, in spite of the intentions to do something good or worthwhile. In *Trin.*, Augustine dealt again with the human will in the following ways:⁹⁹ its unity in the triad of memory, intelligence and *voluntas* (*Trin.* X.10.13–end)—here the will contributed to the acquisition of self-knowledge; its involvement in triads of the outer man in book XI: here, again, the will had a part in acquiring knowledge. The will was also associated in particular with the element love and desire (XI.2.5). As in Plotinian philosophy, Augustine depicted the will as either directed to higher eternal goods or to lower material ones (*Trin.* XI.6.10). As in *Conf.*, Augustine repeatedly stressed the soul's difficulty of keeping her focus on God because

99 Chapter 5.3.3: 'A Prelude to the Study of the Triads in the *Imago Trinitatis* Book VIII'; 5.3.6: 'The Object of the Trinities: Self and God'; 5.3.9.1: 'Introduction: Defining the Frontiers of the Element Love'; and 5.3.9.7: 'Self-Love and Longings: Between Truth and Delusion'.

of her inclination to fall back, being weighed down by sin, greed and wanderlust (*Trin.* VIII.2.3). *Trin.* XIII.2.5 refers to the necessity of the collaboration of the human will in order to believe and also to persevere in faith. Thus, Augustine's preoccupation with the will and the debilities of the soul was still urgent enough to elaborate it further even up to the end of his last major work (*Trin.* XV.27.50). The conclusion here is therefore: that Augustine treated the human will, sin and related matters more extensively, more explicitly and in many more contexts than Plotinus.

For Augustine, other psychological factors were missing as well in Plotinus' philosophy. Another point of Augustine's critique of the Platonists from *Conf.* VII.20.26 was their neglect of the importance of humility. This could only be sufficiently grasped by accepting and partaking of the human life of the Incarnation of the Son of God, which also entailed clearly recognizing human faults and thus the inherent difference between oneself and God. Hence, for Augustine, Plotinus' psychology did not address the question of arrogance to the extent that it should have (and it could never have as long as it denied the important lessons involved in the story of the life of Christ). Yet the subject of humility was in fact implied in Plotinus' perspective of the will, as in the 'wrong focus', which led to illusions and potential vice.¹⁰⁰ It was also included in the negative implications of the notion of *τόλμα*, in desiring to be independent, to turn away and be separate from one's divine source (*Enn.* V.1.1). The difference here is Augustine's underlining that this arrogance blocked all further personal development, including one's ascent to God, which included obtaining divine knowledge. Pride led to spiritual death. The only remedy of such was Christ, who would bring us to true life and resurrection.¹⁰¹

Although Plotinus discussed the weaknesses of the soul or the will throughout the *Enneads*, it was not clear whether Plotinus mentioned the necessity of self-critique. However for Augustine, the examination of conscience and

100 In *Trin.* XIV.20.26, Augustine mentions the Platonists' conception of the eternal soul as well as the benefits of living a virtuous life in order to become happy. Yet he regrets that their lack of faith in Christ will leave them unhappy men. 'But from the philosophers, as he himself admits (LZ: 'he' is Cicero—whom Augustine is quoting here) "and they the greatest and far away the most brilliant", he had learnt that souls are eternal. It is quite reasonable that eternal minds should be stirred by his exhortation to be found in their course when they come to the end of this life, "that is in reason and in eager inquiry", and should "mix themselves up less in the tangled vices and errors of men", to make their return to God all the easier. But this course, which is set in the love of and inquiry into truth, is not enough for unhappy men, that is for all mortals who have this reason alone without any faith in the mediator.'

101 *Trin.* IV.10.13, 12.15.

confession of sin, combined with the realization of the vast imperfections of human existence, which were concentrated in his complex psychology of the human will, came forward as an explicit prerequisite for becoming healed and progressing further on the road to obtaining *sapientia* and becoming godlike. These points were of utmost importance in his doctrine of the image of God and the ascent to God. Their accentuation was missing in Plotinus' epistemology and psychology. In sum, the realization of the soul's deficiencies and the influence of sin in human life represented for Augustine a clear argument why the soul could in no way be divine (*Trin.* xv.27.50).

As regards Augustine's reception of Plotinus, he surely must have read Plotinus' treatments on the deficiencies of the soul and the will. He must have additionally noticed as well the problem that these treatments were not referred to directly in the same context of the intellect's ascent to God. Augustine apprehended in the *Enneads* the ontological division between the divine and physical creatures. However, he also noted Plotinus' subtle suggestions of differences concerning the relationship between the intellect and the divine Intellect. Only by having extensive knowledge of Plotinus' philosophy, could a reader understand how these two aspects were reconciled. This comprehension would not be likely if one merely read a few popular treatises from the *Enneads*, such as i.6 or v.1. In order to incorporate Plotinus' epistemology to such an extent as we have seen in this section, Augustine must have certainly studied many of the more complicated and lengthy treatises such as v.3 and those in book iv on the difficulties of the soul. He deemed it then a matter of urgency to fill in the lacunas in Plotinus' legacy by accentuating these same points in his own doctrines. For that reason, he underscored throughout his entire theology the division between the Creator and the created. By expressing the deficiencies of the will in at least three of his major works, *Conf.*, *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.*, he elevated the will to a full-fledged doctrine as well as a hallmark of his thinking.

At the same time, in the same works, we see an extensive borrowing from Plotinus' notion of Intellect/intellect and imaging which were applied to a large degree to his doctrines of the *Verbum Dei*, the *caelum caeli*, the image of God, the intellect and his epistemology. Plotinus' teaching of the divine Intellect, its characteristics, as well as those of the individual human counterpart, permeated his doctrine of creation and of the Trinity. These, in turn, re-confirmed his explicit appreciation of these concepts which he had described in *Civ. Dei* viii, ix and x. Augustine's appreciation for these aspects of Plotinian philosophy impelled him to make explicit corrections. In Augustine's time, his contemporary Neo-Platonists were doing the same.

4.2 *On the Divinity of the Soul (2)*

Now we shall return to the question as to why Augustine did not reproach Plotinus for his doctrine of the divine soul. The first reason is obvious—because of his deep knowledge of Plotinus' doctrine of intellect (such as the aspects of contemplation, imaging and true knowledge) which he apparently regarded highly and integrated into his doctrine of *imago Dei/Trinitatis*. He would have understood Plotinus' doctrine sufficiently to realize how these statements were neutralized in other parts of the *Enneads*.¹⁰²

Yet, there is another possibility as to why he might have refrained to mention Plotinus in his critique of the consubstantiality of the soul with the divine. A contemporary of Augustine, the Neo-Platonist Iamblichus (mentioned once in *Civ. Dei* VIII.12), a student of Porphyry, and much older than Augustine, recognized these discrepancies too in the teachings of Plotinus. Additionally, a later prominent Neo-Platonist, Proclus, who was much younger than Augustine (and whose works Augustine therefore could not have known), did so as well. The latter fact proves the tenacity of Iamblichus' critique long after Augustine's death and that this critique would have surely been familiar to him. These Neo-Platonists posited the theory of the 'descended embodied soul' (to contrast Plotinus' intellect as the 'undescended soul').¹⁰³ However, because of the difficulties of the soul's attainment of the divine Intellect, these philosophers were both favorable to the practice of theurgy. In turn, they criticized Porphyry for his reserve and critical view of these practices. Recalling Chapter 2.2.2 and *Civ. Dei* VIII.17, etc., Augustine expressed his unambiguous distaste for theurgy and demonology, angrily spilling much ink refuting it in defense of his conviction of Christ as the sole reliable intermediary between humans and God.

Thus it is altogether likely that it was Iamblichus whom Augustine was thinking of when he commended the distinction between creatures and their Creator, as Iamblichus apparently made this distinction more prominent than Plotinus. Yet Plotinus did not advocate using demons or intermediaries; he remained optimistic of the mind's capacities to overcome the crippled condition of the soul by the power of its own contemplation and by submitting to the attraction of the forces of the divine, such as Beauty and Ἔρως. All in all, the most likely conclusion to draw here is that Augustine would have rather expressed his preference for Plotinus' view—and omit his critique of the passages on the divinity of the soul—than to concede in any way to theurgy or its practitioners. We will depart now from this question but return again to it in the context of the

¹⁰² Armstrong, 'St. Augustine and Christian Platonism', 7.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, 8.

comparison of the ascent of both thinkers in the Chapter 9. We will see again in that section that Augustine indeed found it imperative to correct Plotinus where he failed to explain important elements concerning the ascent.

4.3 *Conclusions*

The numerous affinities between Plotinus' intellect and Augustine's image of God showed unambiguously that the characteristics of the νοῦς or intellectual vision which Augustine read in the *Enneads* were of great importance for his delineation of the trajectory of personal evolution which an image of God must undergo, in order to augment its imaging and imitation of Christ AND as a way of finding peace and contentment in this life. Augustine's epistemology, including the imaging of the intellect, corresponded almost exactly to that of Plotinus. The intellect was an image of the second Trinitarian Person which Augustine likewise delineated with characteristics of Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect and Λόγος as we saw in Chapter 6 on the Godhead. In turn, the divine second Person/Hypostasis had a special relationship to the first divine Person/Hypostasis, its source. Augustine, just as Plotinus, posited that the intellect was free from sin and fallibility; it encompassed the notion of the good working will, which knew the way to upward orientation and realized its wholly dependent relationship on the second divine Trinitarian entity and the Ideas. In its unification with God, it assimilated to some degree eternal Being, immateriality and immutability, thereby realizing a resemblance to God in a gradual manner. Augustine's doctrine of the image of God can be described as entailing a realistic, critical view of mankind and the human soul, contrasted with an enormous optimism for the potential to become a perfect image of God by actualizing one's intellect. From this general perspective, Augustine's doctrine was distinctly similar to the philosophy of Plotinus.

Plotinus' influence was also detectable in the development of his doctrine of the image of God from *Gen. litt.* to *Trin.* In *Gen. litt.*, Augustine's demonstration of imaging was limited to the relationship of the intellect with the second Person and not to the three divine Persons. We were able to deduce from this Augustine's apparent dissatisfaction with his doctrine of the image after composing *Gen. litt.*, wishing to complete it in *Trin.* by providing a whole picture of imaging in the human soul, following the example of Plotinus' *Enneads*. In other words, the Plotinian system of the soul/intellect imaging the triune Godhead was a model for Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*, which thereby included the necessity of correction on a number of major and minor points.

The first of the major differences in Augustine's and Plotinus' conceptions of image-intellect were already provided in Augustine's critique of the Platonists

in Chapter 2.1. The major element which he claimed in *Conf.* VII.9.13 missing from Platonist philosophy involved the Incarnation of the second divine Trinitarian entity, Christ, who for Augustine played a foremost role in his epistemology in *Trin.* as personal divine intermediary. The human soul had a personal relationship with the deity Christ who had lived a human life on earth. For Augustine, like Plotinus, the second divine Person/Hypostasis served as the source of all knowledge and wisdom through his illumination. Augustine maintained as well that Christ's human life provided a source of divine knowledge. Additionally, the knowledge of his exceptional life was handed down to us in the Scriptures. In section 3 of this chapter, it was established that the scriptural context of Augustine's epistemology and the element faith which embraced the veracity of its content, did not necessarily constitute major differences in the thought of the two. The Scriptures were for Augustine a form of *scientia* that the Christian reader comprehended with the assistance of intellectual vision and Christ's illumination in order to obtain *sapientia* (a good illustration of this was *Gen. litt.* XII.6.15.). According to Plotinus and Augustine, contemplating the eternal Ideas and judging oneself in the light of eternal Virtues was a way to make oneself a good person and to increase one's resemblance to God. Yet for Augustine, other standards by which to judge oneself were the acts and words of Jesus Christ, the perfect Image of God in his life on earth. Likewise through his personal intervention as Eternal Word and Creator, Christ brought the human soul to an adequate focus and contemplation of itself and the divine (*Trin.* XIII.19.24-see quote above). Hence, although the points of faith and scripture did not involve a marked difference between Augustine and Plotinus, these elements are so anchored in Augustine's Christology that they do form a stark deviation from Plotinus' outlook.

The second major difference dealt with Augustine's overt emphasis on a number of minor issues: the necessity of self-critique, which arose out of his greater accentuation of the weaknesses of the soul and the importance of humility. Thereby the urgency arose to confess one's sins, which, in accordance with the New Testament, would be remitted by Christ. In this way, the personal human element,—as confirmed by Augustine's inclusion of Jesus Christ in the triune Godhead in Chapter 6—which was relayed through Scripture and revelation,—permeated his epistemology throughout. Augustine's epistemology accentuated other elements to a greater extent than Plotinus', such as the importance of faith and prayer for obtaining knowledge of oneself and of the divine. As these four aspects were intricately intertwined into his Christology, they pointed to the deeply Christian character of his doctrine. They were essential for building and strengthening one's personal relationship to Christ.

As regards the issue of the divinity of the soul, Augustine had established an explicit ontological demarcation line between the Creator and creature in his doctrine of the intellect, while this aspect in Plotinus' doctrine νοῦς was at times questionable. Let us now review the conclusions. In the eyes of Augustine, Plotinus indeed failed to clearly and consistently explicate the limits of the highest part of the soul and the divine. Motivated by this lacuna in the *Enneads*, Augustine subsequently felt the need to emphasize in his own doctrines the differentiation of the image of God and God, by accenting the weaknesses of the soul and the inherent deficiencies of the will. He thereby often enunciated these conditions directly in the context of his treatment of the image of God and the ascent. Because Plotinus claimed a certain direct connection of the intellect with the divine, he failed to sufficiently distinguish between the lower and higher rational soul, both of which were presumably divine. Augustine compensated for this deficiency in the thought of his Platonist mentor by, for example, more carefully explaining the gray zone between *scientia* and *sapientia* in his epistemology and thereby giving this lacuna significance. The explanation was fueled by the manifestation of Christ as personal intermediary who would lead the soul to higher contemplation and understanding of the divine.

In his appraisal of Platonism in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei*, Augustine did not mention Plotinus in his critique of those who adhered to the consubstantiality of the soul with the divine. This was for several reasons: he was familiar enough with the *Enneads* to realize that Plotinus neutralized his apparently contradictory comments in other treatises. Additionally, his affinity with Plotinus (his doctrine of intellect, imaging and the ascent) was greater than his affinity of the later Neo-Platonists, who were more his contemporaries. These philosophers, unlike Plotinus, adhered to theurgy, a practice which Augustine wholly rejected, as he made clear in *Civ. Dei*.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, Augustine, just as Plotinus, advocated the image-intellect's capacity to gradually assimilate divine aspects of immateriality and eternity, of which the lower rational soul is incapable. Plotinus' doctrine of the intellect was such an extensive source of information for Augustine that we cannot label the point of the divinity of the soul as a major point of difference between them. However this perspective will be examined again in the analysis of the ascent in Chapter 9, where these aspects will be brought more into relief in the comparison involving the ascent to and the imaging of the Godhead.

104 X.9–11 and 21–32 (while addressing Porphyry).

Augustine and Plotinus on Love

1 Introduction

In Chapter VII, we confirmed the established consensus that Augustine's theory of knowledge in *Trin.* VIII–XII was largely Plotinian. It was intricately entwined with his doctrine of love, a biblical exegesis which he had already elaborated in other works.¹ Yet if love and knowledge (especially self-knowledge) were intricately fused in *Trin.* and Augustine was indebted to Plotinus for his epistemology, what are we then left to ascertain of Augustine's doctrine of love in *Trin.* and his overt biblical references? His exploration of the human mind in books VIII–X is in fact chocked full of biblical quotes, such as from the Epistle of John and the letters of Paul, where love and knowledge are emphasized in one's relationship to God and one's redemption.

In contrast to the considerable quantity of scholarly literature dealing with Augustine's indebtedness to Plotinus' epistemology and conceptions of self-knowledge, I have found only a few studies directly delineating Augustine's dependency on Plotinus' notion of Ἔρως for his conception of love in *Trin.* VIII–X.² For that reason, the material in this chapter is unique and—perhaps needless to say—there is a scarcity of opponents to argue against.

A few remarks on the most obvious difference in the treatments between Augustine and Plotinus are called for. In the preceding chapter, we noted a clear parallel between Augustine's treatment of self-knowledge in *Trin.* and Plotinus' epistemology. However, the parallels to Plotinus in his treatments of love are not quite so lucid. For instance, in *Trin.* VIII–X, the elements of love and knowledge are woven closely together and are as such treated simultaneously. Plotinus' treatment of love and knowledge usually occurred in two separate contexts. Yet there are a few instances in which the themes knowledge and love are woven together. The first concerns the divine Intellect in its phases of development after coming to existence as a Λόγος or Image of the One.³ The second involves the soul's ascent to the Intellect: it was not only the desire to experience intensified love and beauty which drove the soul upwards but also

1 E.g., *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus decem* (written in ca. 407).

2 See Chapter 1.4.6 for a *status quaestionis* on this topic.

3 The loving Intellect and the thinking Intellect, treated in Chapter 3.4; *Enn.* VI.7.35.20–28.

the desire to know (*Enn.* III.8.7.1–5). Sometimes Plotinus deals with the two themes together in the same treatise, but they are usually treated one after the other, such as in v.8. *On Intelligible Beauty* (an extensive treatise in which Ἔρως, beauty, self-knowledge and the two types of rational knowledge are discussed) and in another lengthy treatise vi.7 *The Forms and the Good*. In Augustine's depiction of love in *Trin.* IX–X (see Chapter 5.3.9), there were many similar expressions found from this treatise. For this reason, this treatise will be utilized here frequently.

Determining to what extent Augustine employed Plotinus' notion of Ἔρως imposes certain challenges for the researcher. This study could theoretically strive to unravel the biblical⁴ from the non-biblical in Augustine's treatment of love, that is, the Epistle of John from Plotinus' epistemology and his conception of Ἔρως. However it is remarkable that in the short text of 1John, there are many general themes which would certainly not be alien to Plotinus. A few examples are: the claim that all love derives from God; love and God in the association of Light and Truth; the importance of loving God first before the world; the contemplation of God and the recognition that human sin blocked one from receiving the fullness of God's love. Evidently, distinguishing the biblical from the non-biblical is not always an easy feat. Furthermore, it will not always be possible here to pull apart the intertwining themes (such as knowledge and love or love and will). Overlaps and cross-referencing to material already treated elsewhere in this study occur here plentifully.

We will also focus here on how both authors dealt with love on the human level, which is intricately connected to the ascent to God by love. Yet the aspect of the ascent in both thinkers will be treated separately in Chapter 9. Section 4 of this chapter has an additional unusual feature: the theme of love in the Godhead. From a thematic perspective, this treatment belongs more appropriately in the section comparing their views on the Godhead (Chapter 6). However that chapter dealt more with generalities. The subject of the Godhead and Love will be treated here in a more specific manner, due to its close relation to love on the human level, and due to divine love being the source of human love in both Augustine's and Plotinus' doctrine. As mentioned in Chapter 6.2.4, there are some interesting correspondences between Augustine's conception of the Holy Trinity and Plotinus' first Hypostasis the One. These correspondences are now most relevant. The best strategy for the treatment in this section is to begin with summaries of the doctrines of love of both thinkers. Following this, in sec-

4 Augustine's biblical sources for his doctrine of love were predominantly 1Cor. 13, 1John 4, Matt. 22:37–40 and Gal. 5:14. Treated in Chapter 5.3.9.3.

tion 3, similar general conceptual correspondences between both authors will be brought to light—those which are most evident and require little further explanation. Section 4 will discuss the differences and section 5 ‘Synthesis’ will analyze the differences in order to determine the major and the minor ones.

2 Summaries of Plotinus and Augustine on Love

2.1 Plotinus’ Notion of Ἔρως⁵

Plotinus articulates Ἔρως⁶ as a force which derives from the ultimate source, the One, the first Hypostasis.⁷ Love is transmitted through the Godhead, respectively to the divine Intellect and Soul, as a substantial nature (οὐσία) (*Enn.* III.5.3–4) and further to individual souls and their experiential world. This inherently active, but mostly dormant force of love in humans, can be awakened by the experience of beauty on the physical level of sense perception. Plotinus describes Ἔρως as a life, a brilliance or grace which makes itself desirable and without which, beauty would be cold and inert (VI.7.22, 24). Plotinus also taught that love is light and that the soul is awakened by this light at the perception of beauty.⁸ Human love is inspired by physical beauty in an object or person which seems indefinable. On this level of love, there is a presentiment of infinity of the One or Good, which surpasses all Form and Thought. The soul is primarily moved unconsciously by her love for the Good.⁹

The experience of Ἔρως begins with the experience of the lover for the beloved. Yet being captivated at the physical beauty of the beloved is, according to Plotinus, not the fullest kind of love which can be realized. ‘For since the soul is other than God but comes from him, it is necessarily in love with him and when it is there (LZ: unified with the One), it has heavenly love, but here (LZ: in material existence), love becomes vulgar ... the soul then in her natural state is in love with God and wants to be united with him.’ (*Enn.* VI.9.9.26–30, 34–35). Ἔρως, as a divine force, drives human desire upwards to experience divine love. It moves the lover beyond human love because human love is merely an

5 Treated in Chapter 3.4.7. Plotinus explores the conception of superhuman love, Ἔρως, in three main treatises: *Enn.* III.5, VI.7 and VI.5.10.

6 On the Greek and Latin terminology of ‘love’: Plotinus’ terminology consists of: ἔρως, ἀγάπη and φιλία (e.g., φιλία *Enn.* VI.7.14.20 / ἀγάπη: VI.8.15, 16.12–14). Rist (*Eros, Psyche*, 76–86). Pigler, *Plotin, L’amour*. Arnou, *Désir de Dieu*, 53–66.

7 E.g., *Enn.* VI.8.15.1–5; VI.7.14; VI.7.22.20.

8 *Enn.* V.3.17.15–40, VI.7.22, 26–end.

9 *Enn.* VI.7.22.15–25, 35.20–24.

image of true love (VI.9.9.39–47). The soul desires to experience love even further. Ultimately she longs for union with the indefinite goodness of the One, which can only be realized in a higher level of consciousness (VI.7.22.15–25).

In order to reach the ultimate summit of love, the soul must first pass through the realm of the *Noûs* and the eternal archetypal Forms. Hence in order to intensify the experience of Love, the human soul needs to actualize her intellect, that is, to pursue the cultivation of its highest region. This entails exercising the mind in order to activate an intuitive, immediate grasp of the archetypal Ideas, Forms and universal Truth. "Ἐρως urges the soul to desire to see the eternal and unchangeable Forms more purely so that one's love not only becomes intensified but truer. In effect, the soul's initial desiring of physical beauty leads to the longing for the more magnificent beauty in the divine Intellect.¹⁰

The spectacle of divine Beauty in the world of Forms, with their indescribable charm *χάρις* radiated from the One, bedazzles the soul (VI.7.22.21). At this stage, the intellect enflames with love, incurring the birth of true love. 'For there in the realm of the Intellect is true delight and the greatest satisfaction, the most loved and longed for, which is not in the process of becoming or movement, but its cause (LZ: the One) is what colours and shines upon and glorifies the intelligibles' (VI.7.30.30–32).

True love is non-appetitive, thus has no need.¹¹ When the focus of one's love and desires is on physical or exterior things, an individual is capable of sin. In the activity of being drawn to the immaterial beauty of one's origins, beyond oneself—as in intellectual vision—the soul could not sin.¹²

Desire, as an extension of "Ἐρως, is what initially conceives higher thought (v.6.5). Love also has to do with the approbation or judgment of what is ultimately good, the latter of which is the soul's desire and love (VI.7.20.22). One's longing for divine knowledge, is fulfilled by a vision of God which can increase with intensity. Attaining this vision and rising up to the ultimate source is the goal of life (III.8.5–7).

The experience of love by the human soul in the realm of the *Noûs* mirrors the divine Intellect itself when it came into existence from the One. Plotinus

10 'When anyone, therefore, sees this light, then truly he is also moved to the Forms and longs for the light which plays upon them and delights in it, just as with the bodies here below, our desire is not for the underlying material things but for the beauty imaged upon them. For each is what it is by itself; but it becomes desirable when the Good colours it, giving a kind of grace to them and passionate love (*ἔρως*) to the desirers. Then the soul, receiving into itself an outflow from thence, is moved and dances wildly and is all stung with longing and becomes love.' (*Enn.* VI.7.22.1–10).

11 E.g., *Enn.* VI.9.9.44–50, V.3.10.50–end; Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, 76–86, 183.

12 E.g., *Enn.* I.1.9.1, V.5.1.54–end. Treated in Chapter 3.3.6 and Chapter 4.3.3.

describes the inception of the Intellect as a Λόγος or image of the One. The Intellect longed to know its source and so turned to it. When it was touched by it, it became drunk—as with nectar—with love and joy at this immediate contact without the presence of Thought and Ideas (VI.7.35.24–25). In falling in love, it went out of its mind as it were, carried off by (and to) the One (VI.7.36.15–20, esp. 19). Plotinus depicted the human intellect as understanding itself as an image of the Νοῦς, imitating the Intellect's amorous and ecstatic contemplation of the One (as the Loving Intellect), while at the same time fascinated by the divine Life and Thought in itself (as the Thinking Intellect).

Ἐρως as a dynamic movement which desires ultimate consummation of its love for beauty, is not truly gratified at the level of Intellect. When the beauty of the thinking Intellect and its Forms fills the human intellect with love, the soul realizes that this Beauty is actually just a resemblance of the highest Good (VI.7.15.9). Progressively the soul increases in likeness of the divine, first of the Intellect, then of the One. By making oneself as inwardly beautiful as possible, Plotinus states, a person can prepare himself for receiving the One and the truest love. Hence, once in the realm of the Intellect, in order to advance higher to the One, one must let go of all reason, Form and intellect. 'For this, since it (LZ: the One) is beauty most of all, and primary beauty, makes its lovers beautiful and lovable.' (*Enn.* I.6.7.30).

As such, Plotinus uses human love (love for each other) as a metaphor for the mystical union.¹³ When the One appears to the human soul, human love then disappears. In complete union with the One, there is nothing between the soul and the One, they are both one, no longer two. Two lovers in the world below imitate this in their will and desire to be united (VI.7.31). The human experience of the One is similar to the soul's experience of the Νοῦς, only a momentary but not a definite unification or deification (VI.7.34–35). Plotinus described this as quiet ecstasy or bliss (VI.9.11).¹⁴

2.2 Augustine's Depiction of Amor

Augustine's discussion of the theme of love¹⁵ in *Trin.* VIII begins with an exploration of how the force of love plays a role in the human mind, specifically in the human image of God, the highest part of the soul, or the intellect. Here he

13 *Enn.* VI.7.34.5–16; IV.4.2.27–28; VI.9.9.39.

14 The content in this section is based upon the summary in my article: 'Aflame in love: St. Augustine's doctrine of *amor* and Plotinus' notion of *Eros*', *SP* 2018, vol. 1, 69–80.

15 Treated in Chapter 5.3. For the terms 'love': *amor*, *dilectio* and *caritas*. These terms are generally synonymous and used interchangeably by Augustine (*Civ. Dei* XIV.7). See also: van Bavel, 'Love', 509; Dideberg, '*Amor*', 294–300; '*Caritas*', 730–743; '*Dilectio*', 435–453.

describes how one can love God and how God is intelligible. God is love and the source and origin of all human love. God is Light, Truth, God is 'Good'. This 'Good' serves as criteria for our judgment. God as Love and Good can be contemplated in the eternal Forms. Hence by turning to God, the human being becomes good (*Trin.* VIII.2–6). Implied in this conception of 'God' is Christ the Son as Wisdom (VII.1.1–3.6), in whom the eternal Forms exist (VI.10.11–12, etc.) and the Holy Spirit as divine Love (XV.18.31, etc.).

Augustine explores why we love other persons (*Trin.* VIII.6.9). This is because we see in another that she/he is just. Augustine states that what we love (or should love) in others is something immaterial and invisible. Just as the Form Good mentioned above, the Form *Iustitia* is an eternal Idea, with no material counterpart. By loving the Form Justice—which is the equivalent of loving God, as when one loves the Good—a person can become just.¹⁶ It appears here that 'being just' for Augustine involves honesty towards oneself and fairness towards others. He adds that we can see the perfect Form Justice without being perfectly just ourselves. By contemplating this Form we are able to see the degree of 'being just' in ourselves and can also love others for having this trait—or at least for their potential to become just. Augustine recommends this as one of the ways we can love ourselves as well as others—to love one's neighbor as oneself.¹⁷ As such, spiritual love is without sin. In *Trin.* VIII.7.10, he speaks of true love, which is what one should search for and cleave to; in his mind true love is inseparable from living justly. He quotes a verse from 1 John 2:10: "Whoever loves his brother," he says "abides in the light and there is no scandal in him." It is clear that he (LZ: John) sets the perfection of justice in the love of one's brother; ... In these ways, Augustine binds the Form Justice with true love.

Augustine's objective in *Trin.* VIII is to explain the triads in the inner man in which love and knowledge were the key elements. These two elements reflect in a vague way the divine consciousness, Love and Knowledge in the divine Trinity. Moreover, the elements love and knowledge in the *imago Trinitatis* derive from God who is Wisdom and Love, as represented by the second and third Trinitarian Persons. To demonstrate that the Holy Trinity can be reflected in the human spirit, Augustine writes: '... oh but you do see a Trinity, if you see charity.'

16 Augustine's definition (or ideal) of being just: 'That man is just which knowingly and deliberately, in life and in conduct, gives each man what is his own ... in order to owe no man anything but to love one another (Rom. 13:8). And how is one to cleave to that Form (Justice) except by loving it?' (*Trin.* VIII.6.9). In 1 John 2 and 29, the author writes that sin signifies committing acts of injustice. Whoever lives in God cannot sin or do injustice. Jesus is Justice, who takes away our sins.

17 'True love then is that we should live justly by cleaving to the truth ... And if a man is full of love, what is he but full of God?' (*Trin.* VIII.7.10).

(VIII.8.12). Augustine illustrates this with an intramental triad: (*amans-quod amatur-amor*) the lover (as subject), that what he loves (as object) and love itself. The latter serves as the binding factor between the two. He then invents a new triad: - I, as lover; -my neighbor, the other; and -God. In both triads God or Love itself is the binding or unifying principle. One's love for another is equivalent to loving God because God is the source of all love. Our love for each other depends on God's gift of charity to us (VIII.8.12).

In describing the element love on the human level, he writes: 'What else is love, therefore, except a kind of "life" which binds and seeks to bind some two together, namely the lover and the beloved? ... It remains to ascend even further and to seek for those higher things, insofar it is granted to man.'¹⁸ Further in *Trin.* IX-X, Augustine explains how self-love connects the mind to self-understanding or self-knowledge. Love and knowledge form an interdependent relationship with and in the mind, thereby forming a unity—a unity dimly mirroring the unity of the Holy Trinity.

Longing to know something was not without love for the thing one longed to know (X.1.2). As such, love binds knowledge to the mind. For instance, when something is learned which is considered worthwhile, it will be retained because it pertains to the perfect, universal beauty of the Archetype (*Ratio*) which exists in Christ who is contemplated and loved (X.1.2). Truth and God are beautiful (VIII.3.4, 6.9, 7.10); as such, loving them binds them to oneself.

Love is actualized in the intellect when one's focus is able to shift from the self to God.¹⁹ This shift occurs by the manifestation of God's will and grace. The Holy Spirit pours love and longings into human hearts which motivates the soul to search for God, the source of all love. God's love binds us to others (XV.18.31). Hence, in the same line of thinking, one can only love (and know) oneself through (knowing) God's love. Thus in experiencing God's love, self-love and love for others flow together, as if Augustine intended them to be indistinguishable. Augustine asserts that the search for God and God's love should be never-ending, one always finds God and experiences divine love which nourishes the longing to search further (XV.28.51).

Augustine depicted longings, such as the longing for knowledge, self-knowledge or for God, as ultimately leading to happiness; while other longings—for things of a physical and transient nature—could lead to despair. This depends upon one's focus. If one's self-love were to be actualized in the sense of becoming an image of God, one's self-love must transform to loving one's

¹⁸ *Trin.* VIII.10.14; Translation: McKenna.

¹⁹ *Trin.* XI.6.10, XII.4.4 and XIV.2.4.

neighbor. One would then do acts of good which would be beneficial to all instead of acts solely for the sake of self-enrichment (XII.9.14).

Augustine described true love for others, as oriented first to God. This love has no need, nor does it lead to sin, greed or selfishness, potentially present in the desire and pursuit of physical things (*Trin.* IX.8.13, 9.14).

3 General Correspondences

In these two seemingly distinct expositions on love, there are marked similarities. The following inventory will proceed point by point, first in the context of human love and then love existing in the Godhead.

3.1 *Human Love*

In their depictions of the ascent to God, both thinkers advocated that the experience of love could lead to intellectual vision—a completely immaterial consciousness oriented to the divine in which the Forms or Ideas were contemplated. Love was actualized in intellectual vision.

The force of love was motivated by the experience of beauty on the sense level which carried one upwards. Love and desire, when steered properly by the individual will, that is, by turning one's focus upward to the source and the primary cause of all existence, drove one back to God. Turned to temporal things of matter or physicality, love could easily degrade into sin and evil-doings.²⁰ Augustine and Plotinus were greatly preoccupied with articulating sacred longings.²¹

For both thinkers, Love was a purely spiritual (immaterial) substance which can be known in oneself or in one's mind only when one was involved in the activity of loving something or someone. The actualization of this love entailed loving immaterial things or souls in an incorporeal manner.

Love was expansive and hence discontent with the limitations of transient beauty as object of desire. Plotinus expressed this in the following way: 'And as long as there is anything higher than that which is present to it, it naturally goes on upwards, lifted by the giver of its love.' (*Enn.* VI.7.22.20). Augustine prayed to God in *Trin.* xv.28.51 that he would never stop desiring and loving God. Plotinus illustrated that the love experienced in the union with the One, longed to go even further, even though there was nothing further than the One.²²

20 E.g., *Trin.* XII.9.14–10.15; *Enn.* IV.8.4–5.

21 E.g., *Trin.* IV.21.31 XII.14.22; *Enn.* VI.7.22.1–10.

22 *Enn.* III.5.7.7–26; VI.7.22.15–22.

The true object of one's desire was love itself which could only find true gratification in dwelling in God's abode of eternity and immutability, in other words in the abundance of love, peace and immortality. Love and truth were intricately connected.

Love, as a force driven by desire, was endowed to humans by the Godhead. Augustine wrote: 'Man has no capacity to love except from God. That is why he says a little later, "Let us love because he first loved us" (1John 4:19). The apostle Paul also says: "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5).' (*Trin.* xv.17.31). Plotinus expressed the same thought in this way: 'But there comes to be the intense kind of love for them (the Forms), not when they are what they are, but when, being already what they are, they receive something else from there beyond ... (*Enn.* vi.7.21.12) ... there is need of another light for the light ... in them to appear ...' (*Enn.* vi.7.21.14–21).

If the individual was willing and focused on God or the immaterial, invisible objects of love, one was pulled upwards by love itself. (*Nota bene*: For Augustine, grace was necessary for this upward movement to occur.) Love and desire were the driving forces behind acquiring all kinds of knowledge.²³ Love itself led to self-knowledge, to knowledge of God and the purification of the soul. In this process, the soul became good and gradually more godlike. Thus the source as well as the goal of one's personal human love, for both Augustine and Plotinus, was transcendent divine love.²⁴ The pursuit of such made one happy and awakened the desire to share this love and expand it. The image of God desired and cherished wisdom because only the search for wisdom and God was gratifying.²⁵ The intellect/image of God longed for eternal love and truth.

Plotinus spoke of unconscious love which moved the soul to the Intellect and One. '... in this way the soul also loves the Good, moved by it to love from the beginning. And the soul which has its love already to hand does not wait for a reminder of the beauties here, but because it has its love, even if it does not know it has it, it is always searching and in its wish to be borne away to that Good ...'.²⁶ In Augustine, the idea of unconscious love was implied in his inquiry, for example in *Trin.* viii.4.6: 'How can we love something which we do not completely know?' or 'What we are asking, though, is from what likeness or

23 *Trin.* viii and *Enn.* v.6.5.

24 *Trin.* xv.17.31; *Enn.* vi.7.33.27–30.

25 *Trin.* ix.1.1, xv.1.1 and 2.2; *Enn.* v.1.4.1–20.

26 *Enn.* vi.7.31.19–20. See also *Enn.* vi.7.22.15–25.

comparison of things known to us, we are able to believe, so that we may love the as yet unknown God.' (*Trin.* VIII.5.8)

The following two points deal with self-love and triads, both of which require elucidation. The theme self-love in *Trin.* VIII–IX played a major role in Augustine's theology. It was a key focus of interest in his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*: one's self-love was intertwined in self-knowledge: both of which were dependent upon the relationship with God. Self-love, which was given by God, could be extended to one's neighbor. As such one could love the other as much as one loved oneself. This was illustrated as well in the triad of lover, beloved and love itself. He also explained the negative consequences of excessive self-love.

Self-love was not so explicitly expressed in the *Enneads*, yet it was there by implication.²⁷ Plotinus mentioned it only once in a peculiar comment concerning the self-sufficiency of the One.²⁸ It was also implied in the self-referencing of the Νοῦς, its unity of self and in the experience of the Νοῦς in the state of being turned to and unified in love with the One.²⁹ For Plotinus, the individual soul's self-love would be an activity mirroring the Intellect, as in the Intellect contemplating the One, insofar the soul was able. In the Νοῦς, self-knowledge was perfect and complete (as in the unity of intellect and the intelligible). The soul gained her true self-image by contemplating and uniting with the Νοῦς.

27 Occasionally Plotinus mentions self-love, such as in *Enn.* III.5.4.7–end. Here he questions whether love of self can be real. At the end of the chapter, he affirms that because the self cannot be cut off from higher reality, self-love is related to the universal love of the World Soul. 'Let us grant, then, that the universal soul has universal love, and each of the partial souls its own particular love.' (III.5.4.7) 'So this love here leads each individual soul to the Good and the love which belongs to the higher soul is a god, who always keeps the soul joined to the Good ...' (III.5.4.25).

28 *Enn.* VI.8.15, 1–5.

29 *Enn.* VI.7.24.24–27: '... but if he (LZ: who contemplates the Forms) is stuck in a pleasureless state, why should he say they (LZ: the Forms) are good? Is it because he exists? What then would he gain from existence? What difference would there be in existing or altogether not existing, unless one makes affection for oneself the reason for all this? ...' Further up in VI.7.25, Plotinus refers to the self-unity in the Νοῦς, regarding delight (gratification) as belonging to the desirer which is not the same as being unified with the One, the Good. (LZ: This is a knotty passage:) '... but because he thought it was right that the good, since it had such a nature in itself, should of necessity be delightful and that the desired object must altogether hold delight for the one who is attaining or has attained it, so that who does not have delight does not have good, and so that if delight belongs to the desirer, it does not belong to the First; so that neither does the Good ... (7–11). The Good therefore, must be desirable, but must not become good by being desirable, but become desirable by being good (17–18).' See also below note 35: 'desiring is one with the object of desire' (*Enn.* VI.8.15.1–8).

Therefore, its self-actualization involved (albeit implicit) self-love. Plotinus did not speak extensively about the dangers involved in self-love, as Augustine did, yet he did remark extensively on audacity which led to self-isolation and sin.³⁰

In the thought of Augustine and Plotinus, love was a binding factor illustrated in a triad. As already mentioned, 'love itself' was essentially understood as transcendent divine love. Augustine attempted to define love and in doing so, introduced the first 'trinity' which could be discovered in the human mind as a dim reflection of the Holy Trinity: 'Now love is of someone who loves, and something is loved with love. So then there are three: the lover, the beloved and the love. What else is love, therefore, except a kind of life³¹ which binds or seeks to bind some two together, namely the lover and the beloved?' (*Trin.* VIII.10.14). Plotinus essentially utilized the same triad, yet in the context of the One: 'And he (LZ: the One) that same self, is lovable and love and love of himself in that he is beautiful and from himself and in himself.' (*Enn.* VI.8.15.1–5).³² Love, as a binding factor between the lover and the beloved, is illustrated in the following passage in the *Enneads*, in which Plotinus shows (as he does throughout this treatise) that the One is at the root of the love between the lover and the beloved:

The primary beautiful, then, and the first (LZ: The One) is without form, and beauty is that, the nature of the Good. The experience of lovers bears witness to this, that, as long as it is in that which has the impression received by the senses, the lover is not yet in love; but when from that he himself generates in himself an impression not perceptible by the senses in his partless soul, then love springs up. But he seeks to see the beloved that he may water him when he is withering. But if he should come to understand that one must change to that which is more formless (LZ: the

³⁰ *Enn.* IV.8.4. Treated in Chapter 3.3.

³¹ There is a somewhat similar conception in Augustine's 'love is a kind of life' in the *Enneads*: 'But the division which is in Intellect is not of things confused, though of things existing in unity, but this is what is called the love in the All, not the love in this All; for this is an imitation, since it is a loving of all things which are separate, but true love is all things being one and never separated. (*Enn.* VI.7.14.19–25) ... 15. This life then, multiple and universal and primary and one—who is there who when he sees it does not delight to be in it, despising every other life?' (*Enn.* VI.7.15.1–2).

³² Treated in Chapter 3.4. Continuation of quote: 'For surely his keeping company with himself could not be in any other way than if what keeps company and what it keeps company with were one and the same. But if what keeps company with and what is, in a way, desiring is one with the object of desire, and the object of desire is on the side of existence and a kind of substrate, again it has become apparent to us that the desire and the substance are one.' *Enn.* VI.8.15.1–8. See Tornau, *Eros versus Agape*, 288–289.

One), he would desire that: for his experience from the beginning was love of a great light from a dim glimmer.

Enn. VI.7.33.21–30

3.2 *Love in the Godhead*

As discussed in Chapter 6, there were, as expected, numerous differences in the conceptions of the Godhead of both thinkers, such as the hierarchy in Plotinus' system of Hypostases, which contrasted with the equality of the Godhead in Augustine's thought. Also mentioned was the fact that Plotinus' first Hypostasis shared no common characteristics with Augustine's Holy Spirit, the Trinitarian Person most associated with divine love. Yet there were several aspects concerning divine love which merit our attention, as well as the characteristics applied to the One by Plotinus and the Holy Trinity by Augustine. These will be discussed here again, but first we will review other similarities, beginning with the most general ones.

The first has to do with true love and true beauty which exist in God and are co-extensive.³³ God was the origin of all beauty.³⁴ True love was also strongly associated with loving what is good; loving God as ultimate Good.³⁵ The mate-

33 Augustine on how beauty on the sense level leads to love for God: 'Once more come, see if you can (LZ: see that God is truth). You certainly only love what is good and the earth is good with its lofty mountains' (LZ: Augustine gives a lengthy description of a number of different things which we can see which are good because they are either beautiful, pleasant and healthy and continues:) '... the heart of a friend is good with its sweet accord and loving trust and a just man is good ... and a song is good with its melodious notes and its noble sentiments ... Why go on and on? ... Take away this and that [See Plotinus: *Enn.* V.3.17.39: 'Take away everything!'] and see that good itself if you can. In this way you will see God ... the good of every good. For surely among these things I have listed and whatever others can be observed or thought of, we would not say that one is better than the other when we make a true judgment unless we had impressed on us some notion of good itself by which we approve of a thing and also prefer one thing to another. This is how we should love God, not this or that good but Good itself, and we should seek the good of the soul, not the good it can hover over in judgment but the good it can cleave to in love and what is this but God?' (*Trin.* VIII.3.4); Plotinus: *On Beauty*; v.8. *On Intelligible Beauty*, etc.

34 Augustine: *Trin.* VIII.3.4, 6.9, 7.10, XV.2.3, 4.6; Plotinus, *Enn.* v.8.

35 Augustine: e.g., *Trin.* VIII.3.4, 4.5; Plotinus: throughout *Enn.* VI.7; Examples:

Augustine: 'You certainly only love what is good And this is how we should love God, not this or that good but good itself, that we should seek the good in the soul, not the good it can hover over in judgment but the good it can cleave to in love, and what is this but God?' (*Trin.* VIII.3.4); '... there would be no changeable good things unless there were an unchangeable good. So when you hear a good this and a good that which can at other times also be called not good, if without these things that are good by participation in the good, you can perceive good itself by participating in which these other things are good—

rial supporting the association of love, good and truth is so extensive and lengthy that only a few salient quotes can be given in the notes here. Yet some shorter passages are possible too. For example, Augustine: 'But what is love or charity, which the Divine Scripture praises and proclaims so highly, if not the love of the good?' (*Trin.* viii.10.14). Plotinus: 'For this reason we must consider, too, that the love which good men in this world have is a love for that which is simply and really good, not just any kind of love.' (*Enn.* iii.5.7.31–32).

Closely associated to love and becoming good was the actualization of love by contemplating the Forms.³⁶ Plotinus: 'For there in the realm of the Intellect is true delight and the greatest satisfaction, the most loved and longed for, which is not in the process of becoming or movement, but its cause (LZ: the One) is what colours and shines upon and glorifies the intelligibles.' (*Enn.* vi.7.30.30–32).³⁷ Augustine: 'Therefore, the more ardently we love God, so much the more certainty and calmly do we see Him, because we see the unchangeable Form of Justice in God, and we judge that men ought to live in conformity with it. Faith is therefore a powerful help to the knowledge and the love of God, not as though He were wholly unknown or wholly unloved, but that He may be known more clearly, and that He may be loved more fervently.'³⁸ Hence, one could love God by seeing Him intelligibly in the Ideas.

and you understand it together with them when you hear a good this or that-if then you can put them aside and perceive good itself, you will perceive God. And if you cling to him in love, you will straightaway enter into bliss (*beatificaberis*). But when other things are only loved because they are good, you should be ashamed of clinging to them that you fail to love the good itself which makes them good.' (*Trin.* viii.4.5);

Plotinus: '... in this way the soul also loves that Good, moved by it to love from the beginning' (*Enn.* vi.7.31.18–19); 'And each and every thing's desire and birth-pangs of longing bear witness that there is some good for each.' (*Enn.* vi.7.26.6–7).

36 Plotinus: *Enn.* vi.7.15; vi.7.25: desiring the Good to become Good and become god: Form makes matter good.; *Enn.* vi.7.27–28: Virtue associated with Form, as standard of judgment.

37 Other correspondences in Plotinus are plentiful: e.g., *Enn.* vi.7.15–17: Contemplating the Idea Good makes one good. (Good is also a Form existing in the *Noûs*: ἀγαθοειδής); The Intellect received the Ideas which are Good from the One, the Good. (Even though the One is formless); *Enn.* vi.7.9: Why desire the Good? 'All things desire the Good, ... they seek Intellect for their reasoning.' But the Good is before Reason (The One) (vi.7.20.20–25); Desiring the Good (the One) is always for the better. Note that in Plotinus, Good and matter are opposites. The Form of Good ἀγαθοειδής also manifests in matter: which means that the formation of matter makes matter better (*Enn.* vi.7.28.20–25). Virtue is as Form a standard of judgment of what is good (*Enn.* i.3.4–6). These aspects are found in Augustine's teachings as well.

38 *Trin.* viii.9.13. Translation McKenna; See also: *Trin.* viii.6.9, xv.15.25, 16.26.

These last few points demand explication. Augustine's assertions that God could be seen in the Form³⁹ related directly to the *Verbum Dei* which was explicitly identified as the Form principle.⁴⁰ In turn, this recalled Plotinus' *Noûs* as the domain of the Forms; as well as Plotinus' statements that all desires ultimately lead to the Good—to the Form of the Good (that is: to the Form Good in the *Noûs*; *Enn.* VI.7.21, 28). The Form Good was in Intellect, yet the highest ultimate Good was associated with the One, which stood above all Reason and Form. As illustrated in Chapter 3.4–5., for Plotinus, *Ἔρως* was experienced passionately in the beauty of the Intellect and the Forms, yet desire for the highest Love would lead to the One, the union of which provided more of a climax than the second Hypostasis. It was the presence of ultimate Good in the divine Intellect which motivated souls to desire to go further than actualizing their intellects.⁴¹

Augustine, on the other hand, as a continuation of his exposition on seeing God in the Form, emphasized that loving God would lead to a better mental conception or understanding of God: the more passionate we loved God, the more we could 'see God' (*Trin.* VIII.4.6). He used in this context as example the immutable Form of Justice (such as in *Trin.* VIII.6.9 and the quote above–VIII.9.13). In stating that God could be seen in the Form, Augustine also meant that Form represented an ideal which one strived to become: such as being just, good or loving. In order to become good (or become godlike) one loved the Forms Justice,⁴² Good or Love itself because the soul ultimately perceived God there. Thus for Augustine, love for God or something or someone necessarily entailed love for the universal Form. These accentuations were evident in Plotinus as well, as referred to in the notes, although the association of Love and Justice was not made. (This significant point will be elaborated further in (4.) 'Differences'.)

There are more salient differences to mention here which intertwine with the correspondences. The first difference, already mentioned in the introduction, was Plotinus' notion of the One, the first Hypostasis, which was designated as the source of all Love and Augustine's assertion that God was Love and Good,

39 Treated in Chapter 5.2 and 3; e.g., *Trin.* VIII.2.6, 6.9.

40 Treated in Chapter 4.2; e.g., *Gen. litt.* I–II or II.8.17; *Conf.* XI.2–9; Chapter 5.2; e.g., *Trin.* XV.16.26.

41 '... and the things which have intellect do not stop there, but again seek Good, and they seek Intellect from their reasoning but the Good even before reason. And if they also seek life, and everlasting existence and activity, what they desire is not Intellect in so far as it is Intellect, but in so far as it is good and from the Good and directed to the Good; since this is so also with life.' *Enn.* VI.7.20.20–end. Also *Enn.* VI.7.27.1–10.

42 See Plotinus: *Enn.* I.3.2–6.

in that divine Love was associated with the third Person, the Holy Spirit.⁴³ The difference here was that the Holy Spirit represented Love between the Father and the Son and poured love into human hearts as a gift of God.⁴⁴ Yet, similar to the One, the Holy Spirit represented not only divine Love but Will.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Augustine identified the entire Trinity with Love and Will because of the equality of all three divine persons. We see here again that Augustine's description of the Holy Trinity indeed bore many similarities to the One. His statements on God's Love (as Trinity) relates to Plotinus' depiction of Ἔρως when he stated that love itself and the object of love were the same in the One (*Enn.* VI.8.15). An additional important correspondence is that for Plotinus, the source of ultimate love and beauty was beyond Intellect and the Ideas and in the range of utter incomprehensibility. The aspect of incomprehensibility of the Godhead also applied to Augustine's doctrine of Trinity, which was likewise the ultimate source of all love and beauty (*Trin.* VI.10.12). Additionally we can conclude that Augustine's conception of the divine Trinity was, like Plotinus' One, a self-referencing transcendent unity of love.⁴⁶ Note however that for Augustine, the divine or the whole Godhead was an undifferentiated, non-

43 *Trin. e.g.*, XV.18.31.

44 As stated in Rom. 5:5; *Trin.* XV.17.31, 18.32, 19.37.

45 Plotinus also associates the One with 'Will' in *Enn.* VI.8: *On Free Will and the Will of the One*. (See: Rist, *Deformed*, 64, note 4). Armstrong's introductory remarks on this treatise on i.e., Plotinus' attributing Will to the One, are interesting to note here. The two treatises *Enn.* VI.7 and VI.8 'together contain the profoundest and most powerful expression of the thought of Plotinus about the One or Good. This First Principle is spoken of here in more strongly positive terms than anywhere else in the *Enneads*: the language of will and love and thought is used about him. And he appears as something more like a 'personal God' than he does elsewhere in the *Enneads*. But, as Plotinus makes clear in this treatise, this positive emphasis is in no way intended to be inconsistent with the negative way of approach to the One on which he so strongly insists. It is rather a powerful contribution to that negating of negations which the later Neo-Platonists showed clearly was the final stage on the negative way and was necessary to attain that fruitful and illuminating silence in which alone the One can be contemplated.' Armstrong believes that Plotinus' assertion of the absolute freedom of God's will must come from a Christian source, although he admits that this view has not been generally accepted ('Two Views of Freedom', *SP* XVIII, 1982, 397–406). 'It is in doing this that he uses language more likely than anything else in the *Enneads* to commend his version of Platonism to theists (Platonists, Jewish or Christian) accustomed to think of God as a Supreme Being possessed of intelligence and will; though, as has already been said, he is careful to show that this positive language is in no way inconsistent with his negative theology.' (*Enneads* VII, 223–224).

46 In Chapter 5.3.9.5 [*Amor* in the Image of the Trinity (VIII–X)], I argued that Augustine posited a transcendent Trinity of Love against Tornau, *Eros versus Agapē*, 288–289.

hierarchic realm, unlike Plotinus' conception. Yet both thinkers designated the One and the Holy Spirit as 'givers of love'.⁴⁷

Although Plotinus declared that the One was the source of Love, he was prudent in claiming that the One and Love were necessarily one and the same. This was impossible because the One could have no predicates (*Enn.* VI.7.38). When the *Noûs* came into existence as a *Λόγος* or Image of the One, the energy or unlimited life of the One was transmitted through the energy of the *Λόγος*, resulting in Thought, Love and Life in the Intellect. Subsequently, Love, as well as Desire for the One, Beauty, Life and Being were transmitted from the *Noûs* to the Soul and further to the lower levels of physicality and human beings. In this way, Plotinus did positively consider the One as the source of the divine forces of Love and Desire (as in the desire to know the source).

In Chapter 6 on the Godhead, many resemblances were shown between Augustine's and Plotinus' depictions of the relationship between the first and second divine Persons/Hypostases—the *Verbum Dei* and the *Noûs*. This relationship is also relevant here in the context of love. In Plotinus, Love came into Being when the *Noûs* contemplated its source in the beginning of its existence, as in 'The Desiring or Loving Intellect' (*Enn.* VI.7.35.20–24, etc.). Similarly, for Augustine, divine love was the product of the love between the first and second divine Persons, God the Father and the Son—yet manifesting in the third Person. Similar to both thinkers, the human soul could ascend or come to know the first Person/Hypostasis, by imitating the second.

In sum, the notion of love for both Augustine and Plotinus was the central element in their doctrines of the image of God, alongside the acquisition of knowledge of God, both of which facilitated the ascent. Originating in God, love drove the soul to seek knowledge which expanded the consciousness, leading to unification with the Godhead. Augustine quoted Paul, saying that without love, one's knowledge and talents meant nothing (*Trin.* XV.18.32). In fact, this held true for Plotinus as well. Love (of beauty) was the compelling force behind acquiring higher, immaterial wisdom, the utmost legitimization of a philosopher (*Enn.* I.3.2).

47 Plotinus: *Enn.* VI.7.22.19–20: 'And as long as there is anything higher than that which is present to it, it naturally goes on upwards, lifted by the giver of its love'; Augustine: 'Man has no capacity to love except from God. That is why he says a little later, "Let us love because he first loved us" (1John 4:19). The apostle Paul also says: "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5).' (*Trin.* XV.17.31; see also *Trin.* XV.18.32).

4 General Differences

The correspondences listed above regarding human and divine love are so plentiful that it will not be possible to analyze each of these general statements or individual quotes in order to pinpoint all the differences between Augustine and Plotinus' notion of love. If we were to analyze these more closely, we would indeed uncover numerous gray areas or overlaps, in which minor differences occur. Therefore, what interests us now is pinpointing the stark, black/white differences in separate themes and only those of the greatest importance. They include the following: the personal human element in the Godhead of Love; faith and love; Justice and Love; loving one's neighbor; and prayer, love and desire.

4.1 *The Personal, Human Element in the Godhead of Love*⁴⁸

The first major difference has to do with the Godhead, represented as divine love. What was missing for Augustine in Plotinus' philosophy was an explicit human or personal redemptive element in the Godhead of Love, the Son of God, Christ.⁴⁹ Jesus Christ had become a real person of flesh and blood, exemplifying the life of a human on earth in his suffering of injustice.⁵⁰ He sacrificed himself for the sins of the world, out of his love for the world. He exemplified what a human was destined to become: a perfect Image of God. Christ's life on earth was a model of virtuous, selfless living; a guide as to how to resurrect, become immortal (*Trin.* 1.6.10) and godlike in the afterlife.⁵¹ Christ was the model of Love and Justice.⁵² The Son's further mission within the Holy Trinity, together with the Holy Spirit, was to bring human souls to contemplation of God—to an experience of God's love.⁵³ Divine love was transmitted to human hearts directly through the missions of the Holy Spirit or Christ, in their descent to the human world. In Augustine's view, the whole Trinity loved and cared for its creation (*Trin.* 1.10.20). But the three Hypostases in Plotinus' philosophy did not incarnate or descend to the human world, nor did they play a direct salvific role in redemption. They were not involved in a direct way with loving their creation.⁵⁴

48 See Zwollo, 'Aflame in love', 78–79.

49 *Conf.* VII.9.13; Chapter 2.1.8.

50 E.g., *Trin.* XII.10.13, XIII.16.21.

51 *Trin.* IV.2.4, 4.7, VII.1.1.

52 E.g., *Trin.* IV.2.4, 3.6, XV.17.31.

53 *Trin.* 1.8.16–18, 1.9.10.20; XIII.19.24, XV.18.34. This entails as well the necessity of divine assistance, grace.

54 E. Emilsson: '... the notion of the divine in major thinkers in the Christian tradition, such

4.2 'Love Your Neighbor'

On this point there are some major differences as to how Augustine elaborated on love as deriving from the divine. He made much effort in explaining that divine love enabled us to 'love our neighbor'.⁵⁵ Loving others was not absent in Plotinus treatises on Ἔρως and the One. Additionally, Porphyry explained in *Vita Plotini* 2 and 13 that his teacher's activities in contemplation and teaching philosophy never hindered him from taking those in need under his wing. Plotinus was generous to the extreme in his charity for others. Ironically, minimal space was devoted to this theme in the *Enneads*. Furthermore, Plotinus expressed that whoever was disposed to philosophy, was already separated from the sense world and had no need to first pass through human love in order to attain divine love (*Enn.* 1.3). A philosopher had already reached the awareness of the spiritual world by having contemplated the Ideas. Love was the thrust of mystical union, yet he only needed to be guided by sciences and virtues, which permitted the ascent to the One by means of dialectic.

In Plotinus' descriptions of the union with the One, human love was more of an earthly metaphor.⁵⁶ Did Plotinus believe that all love between human souls

as St. Augustine, has indeed been heavily coloured by Plotinus' notion of Intellect. We should however be on our guard in transferring features of the Christian God to the Intellect. The latter, for instance, lacks all the personal characteristics of the former.' *Plotinus on Intellect* (Oxford, 2007) 5; See Rist: '... the love of human persons seems to have no privileged status in the Platonic tradition.' (*Ancient Thought Baptized*, 160, 148–202). However, Rist overlooks Plotinus' statement that the One gives undiminishing love to all which is beneath it (e.g., *Enn.* VI.7.22.20).

- 55 Augustine: 'True love then is that we should live justly by cleaving to the truth and so for the love of men by which we wish them to live justly, we should despise all mortal things. In this way, we will be ready and able even to die for the good of our brethren, as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us by example. And while "there are two commandments from which the whole law and the prophets depend (Matt. 22:40)", love of God and love of neighbor, scripture not unsuitably often puts just one for both of them. Sometimes just love of God, like "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God" (Rom. 8:28); and again, "Whoever loves God is known by Him." (1 Cor. 8:3) and, "Since the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom. 5:5)" and many other instances, because if a man loves God then it follows that he does what God has commanded and loves God to the extent that he does this; it follows that he loves his neighbor too, because God has commanded this. (LZ: more biblical examples follow: Gal. 6:42, 5:14; Matt. 7:12). And we find many other cases in the sacred writings where only love of neighbor seems to be required of us for perfection and the love of God seems to be passed over in silence, though the law and the prophets depend on both commandments. But this is because if a man loves his neighbor, it follows that above all, he loves love itself. "But God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God (1 John. 4:16)." So it follows that above all, he loves God.' (*Trin.* VIII.7.10).

- 56 E.g., *Enn.* 1.3, III.5.1 and 4, VI.9.9.30–31, VI.9.11, VI.8.15.

fell under the illusions of the physical plane of existence? E. Song interprets Plotinus' philosophy of love in the light of Porphyry's account than his colder, transpersonal statements on the needs of a philosopher.⁵⁷ Yet Song's study represents a minority standpoint and cannot be corroborated here. Plotinus did devote much attention to caring for one's own soul (as Socrates advocated). He believed that true happiness was derived from the longing to be one with God; true love meant being united with the One—the experience of divine Love in oneself—thus not outside of oneself. In fact Plotinus stated in vi.8.15 that the One's love was primarily love of itself: its love was self-directed and as such was wholly without needs. In short, the ultimate experience of love in Plotinus seemed to be predominantly experienced by a person alone with the *Noûs*⁵⁸ or with the One (*Enn.* vi.9.11). Plotinus rarely spoke of the One's or the *Noûs*' love for the world or of anything suggestive of their love for individuals or humanity,⁵⁹ outside of the emanation of these qualities from the Godhead. We can thus maintain that in Plotinus' writings, he did not devote much attention to the subject of human love or relations nor to sympathizing with the difficult lot of others.⁶⁰

On the other hand, Augustine elaborated love for one's neighbor as a natural consequence when loving God and experiencing God's love (as in his illustration of the triad of lover, beloved and Love itself—God in *Trin.* viii).⁶¹ He even went so far as to pronounce human love as equivalent to divine love, provided that divine love was experienced first. (The other way around, loving

57 Song recognizes the discrepancies of these statements in the *Enneads* yet he has discovered passages which he thinks suggest an ethic of caring for others. As such, Song argues against the consensus in scholarship. *Aufstieg und Abstieg der Seele*. Pigler argues that human love is seen as the departure point in Plato's philosophy because true love leads to the Good and love of wisdom. Yet Plotinus' thought does not expound human love as a finality (*Plotin, L'amour*, 17). She also refers to the discussion between Trouillard and Hadot whether mystic experience in the *Enneads* necessarily transcends human love.

58 However, the intelligible world of *Noûs* was sometimes depicted as Heaven, inhabited by the gods, implying a divine community (*Enn.* v.8. chapters 3–4).

59 In *Augustine Deformed*, from 2014, Rist refers to *Enn.* vi.8 in which Plotinus treats *i.a.* will and love (the *Ἔρως* of the One), and concludes, that if Augustine had read this he would have found much to applaud, as he would have recognized many Trinitarian parallels. However, the love of the One according to Plotinus is only directed to himself but not to his 'products' (64, note 4); Rist adds that Augustine had to think about resolving the problem of impersonality of Plotinus' notion of *Ἔρως* (*ibidem*, 71–83).

60 R. Ferwerda, 'Pity in the life and Thought of Plotinus', in: D. Runia (ed.) *Plotinus Amid Gnostics and Christians* (Amsterdam, 1984) 53–62. Ferwerda (translator of the *Enneads* into Dutch) paints a glum picture of Plotinus' view of concern for others.

61 See Rist on Augustine's exegesis of the commandment, love your neighbor (*Ancient Thought Baptized*, 159–168).

others and believing that this sufficed for love of God, he deemed as false).⁶² Augustine also emphasized the importance of humility in the act of being charitable. In turn, one could imitate Christ in the sense of loving others as He loves us.⁶³ As already confirmed, for both Augustine and Plotinus, love was the central element in their doctrines of the image of God-intellect next to acquiring knowledge of God and the ascent. Yet human love was for Augustine a crucial theme, the core business of Christianity. His accent on loving others as a result of loving God and oneself represents a major correction and improvement on Plotinus' doctrine of Ἔρως.

4.3 *Justice and Love*

For Augustine, the Idea Justice was associated with love in a number of ways. We loved others because they were just and good.⁶⁴ The criteria for being just was determined by the divine Idea, Justice. Attaining truth entailed loving Justice and loving the Good. God was absolute Justice and Love.⁶⁵ Justice was also important in Plotinus' ethics: becoming a good person involved assimilating the Good by contemplating the Ideas, Good and Justice.⁶⁶ Becoming a good person was also realized by contemplating the Virtues (*Enn.* 1.2.6, 1.3), which would likewise bring about a purification of the soul. This contemplation would also lead to self-control, right action, the avoidance of sin and to becoming godlike (*Enn.* 1.2.4–6). Becoming a good person was also effectuated by the experience of the total love of the first Principle, the Good. Thus, by association, one could connect the two elements Justice and Love in Plotinus' philosophy although he did not seem to explicitly do so himself.⁶⁷

In the eyes of Augustine, this insufficient explication in the *Enneads* would have entailed serious consequences, because it meant that there was no direct connection between living justly and loving one's neighbor, which was of ut-

62 See van Bavel, 'Double Face of Love'; Teske, 'Love of Neighbor in Augustine'; Canning, *Unity of Love*.

63 E.g., *Trin.* XV.17.31.

64 'Whoever therefore loves men should love them either because they are just or in order that they might become just. This is how he ought to love himself, ... in this way he can love his neighbor as himself.' (*Trin.* VIII.6.9).

65 'So then a man who is believed to be just is loved and appreciated according to that form and truth which the one who is loving perceives and understands in himself; but this form and truth cannot be loved and appreciated according to the standard of anything else.' (*Trin.* VIII.6.9).

66 Burnaby recognized the importance of *Enn.* 1.2.7 for Augustine (*Amor Dei*, 192–193).

67 Justice was, however, identified with Beauty (*Enn.* V.5.1.40–42) and Beauty is what incites love.

most importance for obtaining peace in the world. Thus he emphasized further than Plotinus that in order to become a more perfect image of God, the Idea Justice would naturally also play an important role in one's social relations. We must not only love others for their goodness, he encouraged, but also for their love of and striving for justice, in the sense of their honesty and fairness. Moreover Christ represented ultimate Justice and Charity in his unfailing forgiveness of sins. And Christ, who was not present in Plotinus' philosophy, served as our model of Justice and Love.⁶⁸

4.4 *Faith and Love*

As mentioned in Chapter 7.3, Augustine added a new element to his Plotinian epistemology, namely the importance of faith: *credo ut intellegam*.⁶⁹ In *Trin.* VIII.3.4–6, he questioned whether it was possible to love something which one did not know. If this were possible, how then was it possible to love God? His response was (relayed in a condensed form in VIII.3.4) 'Yet unless we love him, even now, we shall never see him.' Hence, faith was for Augustine instrumental for loving God, whom we will progressively come to know.

In the context of loving God in *Trin.* VIII, he also stressed that faith stimulated love for the Form. One's faith in what was revealed in the Scriptures, stimulated one's love for God which would then lead to a better mental conception or understanding of God. The more passionately we loved God, the more we would 'see God', for example, in the immutable Form of Justice and where the shortcomings of our own practice of living justly was evident.⁷⁰ Augustine not only emphasized the importance of faith in the act of loving God, but also in the act of loving truth; a faith which would eventually lead to the understanding and contemplation of the desired, ultimate truth. He also underlined the importance of the biblical triad faith, hope and love (for example in *Trin.* VIII.4.6): depicting a consciousness which would enable humans to persevere through the difficulties of this life; a life which we are merely passing through

68 E.g., *Trin.* IV.2.4, 3.6, XV.17.31.

69 Augustine: 'So then, since we desire to understand as far as it is given us the eternity and equality and unity of the trinity, and since we must believe before we can understand, we must take care that our faith is not fabricated. This is the trinity we are to enjoy in order to live in bliss: but if we have false beliefs about it, our hope is in vain and our charity is not chaste.' (*Trin.* VIII.5.8).

70 Augustine: '... the more brightly burns our love for God, the more surely and serenely we see him, because it is in God that we observe that unchanging Form of Justice which we judge that a man should live up to. Faith therefore is a great help for knowing and loving God, not as though he were altogether unknown or altogether not loved without it, but for knowing him all the more clearly and loving him all the more firmly' (*Trin.* VIII.4.5).

on our way to the ultimate eternal reality (XIV.2.4). Thus he stressed the necessity of persisting in longing for this destination and holding firm to this faith. As mentioned in the previous chapter on epistemology, it was unclear as to what extent the element faith was of importance in Plotinus' ascent to the divine through knowledge, that is, the contemplation of the Ideas. The aspect of faith combined with love does not seem directly present in the treatises of the *Enneads* studied here. This aspect, in fact, requires further research.

4.5 *Prayer, Love and Desire*

On this last point we can be brief. The last chapter of *Trin.* ended with a 'Prayer to the Trinity'.⁷¹ For Augustine, prayer was a personal expression of desire and love, a way in which the good functioning will with its focus on God could attain the consciousness of the *imago Trinitatis*, the intuitive and immediate apprehension of Truth by God's Illumination. Augustine must have added this prayer to the end of *Trin.* in order to show the activity of prayer as the way to attain the goals which he prescribed in his doctrine of the *imago Trinitatis*: to increase one's resemblance to God.⁷² In this context, he associated the activity of prayer with the process of seeking and finding, longing for and receiving some degree of gratification in pursuing knowledge of God. This point was already mentioned in Chapter 7 section 3.5 at the comparison of the epistemologies and in particular in the section entitled 'Differences'. Plotinus did in fact call upon the gods for help to resolve a philosophical inquiry. Yet his inquiry was ultimately resolved by his own deep concentration and analysis.⁷³ Plotinus would not have objected to praying to God in his desire to know the causes of existence and ascending to the One. The latter involved, among other things, the difficult task of (momentarily) stripping the soul of everything she already knows. It would also have not been alien to Plotinus, in light of his insistence of the soul's dependence on the Hypostases, that he would pray to the gods for assistance to be able to experience divine love at the most unfathomable realm. However, the activity of prayer as a form of loving, worshipping God or as a means of turning one's desires to God was simply not emphasized in the *Enneads* to the extent that Augustine suggested in *Trin.* This point thus constitutes at first sight a gray area and not a major difference between them.

However, seen in another light, we could judge this differently. This study has only confronted Augustine's doctrine of prayer through the passages at the end

⁷¹ *Trin.* xv.28.51; Treated in Chapter 5.3.9.8.

⁷² See Zwollo, 'Prayer, Desire'.

⁷³ *Enn.* III.7.11,8; IV.9.4.6; V.1.6.9; V.8.9.13.

of *Trin.* or in a general sense, such as mentioning *Conf.* in which he is continuously in dialogue with God. It is now timely to take Augustine's other works into account here in which he treated prayer more extensively and where prayer is strongly associated with desire and longing for God. It will bring us to a differentiation in Augustine's world view which has already been touched upon here and will represent a major factor in Chapter 9 on the ascent, indeed constituting a major distinction from Plotinus.

It concerns the communal context in which Augustine interwove the activity of prayer and the aspect of desire, which has a number of different facets. For example in *En. Ps.* 42.1, he described how prayer joined persons together in Christ. Augustine described Christ, as the author of the Psalms, as encompassing all time and space, and already praying, lamenting and exulting in the psalms even before humanity began to do so.⁷⁴ Thus, when the faithful prayed, they were not separated from Christ's prayers. Jesus prayed for us and IN us. We prayed in Him and through Him. Augustine considered all our prayers as a continuation of Christ's prayers for the whole human race.⁷⁵ In this way, all Christians shared in the *Christus totus*.⁷⁶ Praying the psalms, according to Augustine, brought a person to Christ's mind, which in turn, enhanced one's longing.⁷⁷ Being in union with Christ's mind also perpetuated a feeling of unity with one's fellow humans and also with those who had gone before us in faith, because the words of the psalms have been shared for centuries. As such, the prayer of the individual was linked to the prayer of all members of the entire church (*En. Ps.* 86.1.)

As we have seen in the subsection above, *caritas* for Augustine was a gift from God which moved, transformed and purified the soul; it incited one to desire unity with God. Thus, the activity of praying was involved with *caritas* in that it united the faithful first of all in love with Christ. It then united the person doing the praying with others in love. We have already recognized Plotinus' neglect to integrate the significance of loving and caring for others into his teachings.

74 Van Geest, 'Order, Desire,' 442–454.

75 See also e.g., *En. Ps.* 85.1; T.J. van Bavel, 'The *Christus Totus* idea: A Forgotten Aspect of Augustine's Spirituality', in: T. Finan and V. Twomey (eds.) *Studies in Patristic Theology* (Dublin, 1998) 84–94; *ibidem*, *Longing Heart*, 135–150.

76 'Let us manifest our joy and let us be thankful because not only we have been made Christians, but we have also become Christ. ... Be astonished and be glad at this: we have become Christ. For if He is the Head, we are the members: this whole Man, He and us.' (*Io. eu. tr.* 21.8). The quote is from van Bavel, '*Christus Totus*', 86.

77 Van Bavel, '*Christus Totus*', 91; M. Schrama, *Augustinus, De binnenkant van zijn denken* (Zoetermeer, 1999, 2002) 219; van Geest, 'Order, Desire', 453–454.

The unity of God and others through love and desire as well as the collective wholeness it subsumed through the activity of prayer was indeed lacking in a major way in the *Enneads*.

5 Synthesis

The similarities between Augustine's notion of *amor* and Plotinus' "Ἔρως were numerous. In the 'General Correspondences', section 3, the following conclusive statements were articulated in the comparison between Plotinus' "Ἔρως and Augustine's *amor* at the human level:

- Love was actualized in intellectual vision.
- The force of love was motivated by the experience of beauty on the sense level which carried one upwards. Both Augustine and Plotinus were greatly preoccupied with sacred longings.
- Love was a purely spiritual, immaterial substance which could be known in oneself or in one's mind in the activity of loving. The actualization of this love was effectuated by loving immaterial things or souls in an incorporeal manner.
- Love, as a force driven by desire, was endowed to humans by the Godhead.
- Love itself led to self-knowledge, to knowledge of God and the purification of the soul. In this process, the soul became good and gradually more godlike. Thus the source, as well as the goal of one's personal human love, for both Augustine and Plotinus was transcendent, divine love.
- Both thinkers spoke of love as moving the soul unconsciously upwards.
- The theme self-love played a major role in Augustine's theology. It manifested as well in Plotinus' philosophy, yet was not so explicitly expressed as in Augustine's *Trin.*
- In both theologies, love was expressed as a binding factor in a triad.

In examining *amor* and "Ἔρως in the Godhead, we saw the following similar conceptions:

- True love and true beauty existed in God; they were co-extensive.
- God was the origin of all beauty.
- True love was strongly associated with loving what was good. Loving God was identified as the ultimate Good. Similarities involving the association of love, good and truth were, in the works of both thinkers, utilized extensively.
- The actualization of love was accomplished by contemplating the Forms.

Augustine's description of the Holy Trinity showed many similarities to Plotinus' One. To recall some examples: just as the One, Augustine's entire Trinity was identified with Love and Will; love itself and the object of love were the same in the One and essentially in Augustine's divine Trinity as well. As sources of ultimate love and beauty, they were beyond the comprehension of human discursive thought.

There were also a number of differences which we could characterize as minor. These were points of difference embedded in many other similarities, yet were significant nonetheless to mention here, for instance: the notion of faith in the epistemology of Augustine (Chapter 7.3 and 4). Yet when considered in the context of the conception of love, the combined idea of faith and love appeared indeed to be even more remote in the *Enneads*. This applied as well to the point on prayer in the context of desire and love. Nor did ἔρως in combination with the Idea Justice occur explicitly in the *Enneads*, at least not in the treatises on *Eros* which were studied here.

The greatest difference in both thinkers on love had to do with the point on human love. There was no personal or human element of love expressed in Plotinus' conception of Godhead. Plotinus did not make charity and helping or caring for others an explicit part of his philosophy. Nor did he imply that the Godhead was directly involved with individuals, loving them as their creation. These three points contrasted greatly with Augustine's statements on the equivalence of God's love and human love; or on self-love and loving God, which was a prerequisite to loving others. Not only did Augustine accentuate human love more than Plotinus, he also stressed the communal aspects of love which led to social cohesion: such as loving Christ together with other faithful in prayer; sharing faith, hope and love in an ecclesiastical milieu, anticipating the ultimate contemplation of God and resurrection in the afterlife. In the synthesis in Chapter 10, these factors will be considered among the other major differences pinpointed in the comparisons in Chapters 6–9.

Augustine and Plotinus on the Ascent

1 Introduction

Reflecting on all the material treated thus far, we can summarize Augustine's and Plotinus' doctrines of imaging the divine as encompassing essentially intellectual vision, in which one perceived oneself as image of God. Intellectual vision and the ascent were in both Augustine's and Plotinus' works inseparable. Both were instigated by the desire to know and to experience love on a deeper and higher level. As such one's love became actualized in the intellect. Intellectual vision was an experience above normal consciousness in which the soul was immediately present to oneself (instead of being present to the world). It always involved the contemplation of God or the Ideas and the presence of God's Light. The vision described by both thinkers tended to be momentary, intense and unforgettable. It advanced one's knowledge of self and of the divine by an intuitive grasp of truth. More pronounced in Augustine was the suggestion that intellectual vision could occur in various intensities. Plotinus often wrote of the intellect as being immediately conscious of the whole intelligible world and one with it. Yet both prescribed the soul's gradual development of her intellect to its fullest actualization.

The term 'ascent' was accompanied by a number of synonyms: such as 'return to the source', or to 'the Fatherland', or the 'vision of God', which were utilized by both alike. Accounts of the ascent of the soul were abundant in Augustine's and Plotinus' works. Nor was there any shortage of secondary literature on the subject; it is likely one of the most frequent commented subjects on Augustine and Plotinus. The focus in this chapter is on *De Ideis*, *Gen. litt.* and in particular *Trin.* Yet I have not been able to locate much literature specifically dealing with the influence of Plotinus on Augustine's depictions of the ascent in the two latter works.¹ For this reason, a separate *status quaestionis* dealing with that theme is not provided here.²

1 Brachtendorf does treat the ascent of Augustine in *Trin.* and of Plotinus—but not together: *Struktur*: Plotinus: 24–48, Augustine, e.g., 121–126, 194–199. His treatment of intellectual vision in *Gen. litt.* xii does deal with the Plotinian influence (48–55).

2 See Chapter 1, section 4.7 on the brief *status quaestionis* concerning the ascent.

We have already seen that in the works of both thinkers the consciousness of the intellect had a strong relationship to the second divine Person or Hypostasis, which in turn was strongly connected to the first Person/Hypostasis, its Father. We have also seen that both described that ascent to God in terms of knowledge and love. In this chapter, the accounts of the ascent by Plotinus and Augustine will be reviewed and summarized in sections 2 and 3. Because a black/white contrast between the views of both thinkers is difficult to ascertain, a number of common gray areas related to the ascent will be discussed (section 4). Following this are: the general similarities (5); the major differences (6) and in (7), a synthesis which will confront the question: what were Plotinus' and Augustine's claims as to what extent a soul could ascend to God?

2 Plotinus: the Epistemological Ascent and the Ascent by Love

Recalling Plotinus' account of the ascent by (self-) knowledge and Plotinus' process of imaging in Chapter 3.4, the depiction of the ascent was as follows: material things were considered images of Ideas; they were perceived by the physical senses and as such became internalized or retained in the memory as mental images. They were utilized by the mind for remembering, producing imaginative mental images and forming knowledge (*Enn.* iv.4). The soul was propelled to inward reflection by the love or desire of physical objects of beauty as well as by its desire to know (*Enn.* v.8; vi.7). The rational soul dealt with the internal material images of the exterior world, especially in the lower mode of thought, which was discursive. It produced knowledge and self-knowledge from these images (v.1; v.3). This knowledge was certainly useful, however for discovering deeper truth, the images here were deemed mere sources of opinion, as they pertained to the changeable, transient nature of the exterior world. At a higher level of consciousness, the mind contemplated the eternal Ideas which were unchangeable and stable. In the light of the eternal Ideas situated in the *Noûs*, the rational soul and in particular, the intellect, judged the internalized images from the exterior world. This glimpse of the intelligible world was a result of actualizing the intellect, which grasped truth in a momentary, immediate intuition.

Plotinus stated that while in contemplation of the intelligible world, one was possessed by a god (*Enn.* v.8.11), the divine Intellect, the demiurge. In turning to *Noûs*, one encountered the true self. The soul became a truer image of the Intellect, imitating the latter's relationship to the One. This brings us to the ascent to the One by love, but first a few comments on the ascent in the framework of self-knowledge from Chapter 3.4.

Plotinus' epistemological ascent was realized by philosophic reasoning starting from sense perception, rising to discursive reasoning, self-knowledge and intellectual contemplation.

But since we have come to be here below again and in soul, we seek for some kind of persuasion, as if we wanted to contemplate the archetype in the image. Perhaps, then, we ought to teach our soul how Intellect contemplates itself, and to teach that part of the soul which is in some way intellectual, since we call it discursively intelligent and by this naming indicate that it is a kind of intellect or that it has its power through and from Intellect. This therefore should know that in its own case too it comes to know what it sees and knows what it speaks. And if it was what it speaks, then it would in this way know itself. But since the things which it speaks are from above, or come to it from above, whence it also comes itself, it could happen to it, (LZ: it could obtain self-knowledge) since it is a rational principle (λόγος) and receives things akin to it and fits them akin to itself, in this way to know itself. Let it then transpose the image to the true Intellect, the one [we observed] which was the same as the truths it thought which are really existent and primary, ...

Enn. v.3.6.14–30

The human soul rose to the world of the Forms which were identical to the Thought of the Intellect. The Νοῦς thought itself eternally, as pure universal Thought in which discursive thinking or material images were not present. The knowledge acquired from the Intellect was intelligible, genuine and true. The human intellect possessed the inherent potential to imitate the Νοῦς.

If then, the thought [of Intellect] is of what is within it, that which is within it is its immanent form and this is the Idea. What then is this? Intellect and the intelligent substance; each individual Idea is not other than Intellect, but each is Intellect. And Intellect as a whole is all the Forms, and each individual Form is an individual intellect, as the whole body of knowledge is all its theorems, but each theorem is a part of the whole, not as being spatially distinct, but as having its particular power in the whole. This Intellect therefore is in itself and since it possesses itself in peace is everlasting fullness.

Enn. v.9.8.1–8

In the latter's self-contemplation, the subject was equal to the object. As such, the Νοῦς was characterized by absolute Self-Referencing and Self-Knowledge,

perfect unity and the immediate grasp of itself in union with its objects in the intelligible world. It formed in itself a oneness, although its intelligible world consisted of multiplicity.³

The Intellect was also characterized by its love for its source and its longing to unite with it. Thus Plotinus' concept of Ἔρως (Chapter 3.4.7) involved the rise of the soul to the One through the Νοῦς. The forces of love and desire were needed for pulling the consciousness from discursive reasoning to the Intellect. In that consciousness, one experienced the immense beauty in the divine Intellect, that is, universal Love and Beauty within oneself, feeling happily a part of it.

When anyone, therefore, sees this light, then truly he is also moved to the Forms and longs for the light which plays upon them and delights in it, just as with the bodies here below, our desire is not for the underlying material things but for the beauty imaged upon them. For each is what it is by itself; but it becomes desirable when the Good colours it, giving a kind of grace to them and passionate love (ἔρως) to the desirers. Then the soul, receiving into itself an outflow from thence, is moved and dances wildly and is all stung with longing and becomes love.

Enn. VI.7.22. 1–10

From the level of the Intellect, the ascent continued to the supra-transcendent One, after leaving rational or intelligible thought behind. The soul, who had been an image of the intellect (and/or Intellect), then became an image of the One. In doing so, the human soul imitated the Intellect as when it came into existence as a Λόγος from the One, turning to the One, its Father, longing to know him. Aflame in love, it received its individual properties from the One. The One, in its singularity, in contrast to the Νοῦς, did not contemplate itself; it was beyond Form, Being, Thought, Substance and otherness, in other words, it was absolutely and completely one with itself. Thus the desire to know impelled the human soul to rise to the Intellect and actualize her own intellect. Its desire for beauty and love incorporated in the Ideas impelled her to rise even higher, realizing that they were not the ultimate source. 'The individual souls, certainly, have an intelligent desire consisting in the impulse to return to itself springing from the principle from which they came into being ...' (*Enn.* IV.8.4.1).

Plotinus' term Ἔρως connoted essentially a driving force, a longing, which bound the human image (intellect) to its origin, the Universal Intellect. The

³ *Enn.* V.9.7.1–13, –end.

union with the Intellect incited a wild drunkenness of love. Love, according to Plotinus, was always expanding and creative; experienced in the human intellect, the soul still longed for the Good as culmination of all desires and loves. As such, the soul, as actualized intellect, passed beyond the domain of the *Noûs*, not only beyond all thought and Ideas, but also beyond self-consciousness. In union with the first Hypostasis, the soul experienced a quiet ecstasy of infinite love for the All which entailed a temporary loss of individualization.

Hence, for Plotinus, intellectual vision was always an experience which involved an interior metamorphosis. Impelled by *Ἔρως*, the soul was driven from the vast multiplicity of the thoughts stimulated by sense perception, to intellectual vision and ultimately to an experience of absolute love. These experiences of the divine were characterized by a vision of divine Light from above, illumining the mind. The experience of the ascent could be prepared for by a gradual purification of one's physical desires. An excessive focus on the material world or one's body would result in an ego-oriented, unvirtuous life, hindering and distracting from the ultimate goal. If a person could learn to not lose sight of the reality above, the origin or Fatherland, then his/her soul would ultimately become godlike which was the birthright of every human soul.

In spite of the optimism expressed in Plotinus' philosophy of the ascent to the One, certain ambiguities or doubts by the author could be detected as well. The first concerned the human soul's natural tendency to forget its origin and direct itself away from it,—to matter and physicality, which could lead to erroneous thinking and sin. The troubles an individual soul could undergo are illustrated in this passage of the contemplation of the One. In the quote below, Plotinus describes how visions of the One vary according to individual capacity.

For this reason, Zeus (LZ: here an allegory for the Intellect), as the oldest among the gods whom he himself leads, advances first to the contemplation of this God (LZ: the One) and there follow him the other gods and spirits and souls who are capable of seeing these things. But he (LZ: the One) appears to them from some invisible place and dawning upon them from high illuminates everything and fills it with rays and dazzles those of them who are below, and they turn away unable to see him, as if he were the sun. Some endure him and gaze upon him, but others are troubled in proportion to their distance from him. But all those who are able to see, look at him and what belongs to him when they see, but each does not always gain the same vision ... but one, gazing intensely, sees the source and nature of Justice, another is filled with the vision of moral integrity,

not the kind which men have here below, when they do have it (for this is some sort of imitation of that other), but that glory over all, playing upon what we may call the whole extension of that world, is seen at the end⁴ by those who have already seen many clear visions, the gods (LZ: *īa*, the Ideas) individually and everyone together, and the souls who see everything in the intelligible world and originate from everything, so as to include everything themselves from the beginning to end.

Enn. v.8.10.1–22

Plotinus also sometimes expressed a certain sense of failure (the term was used by Tornau, see Chapter 3.4.6) in his depiction of the *Noûs* receiving its properties from the One at its inception. The incapacity was characterized by the ungratified desire to unite with the One, caused by one's self-thinking. The frustration is reflected as well in the statements on human love, being so expansive that not even the experience of the One would completely fulfill it (for example in *Enn.* III.5.7.7–26).

3 Augustine on the Ascent

Augustine's accounts of the ascent were often characterized as Platonistic in character as we saw in *Conf.* (Chapter 2.1.10), *De Ideis* and *Gen. litt.* (Chapter 4.4). This meant that these depictions generally followed the exact pattern as those of Plotinus: a step-by-step elevation instigated by desire of beauty and love perceived at the sense level, shifting one's focus from exterior, material things to one's inward thought processes. Then the soul contemplated God or the eternal Ideas while being illuminated by the *Verbum Dei* above. Thus in Augustine's works, the ascent culminated with a glimpse by the intellect-image of God of pure immaterial light,—the Light of the Creator, a momentary *visio Dei*.

Now among the things which have been created by God, the rational soul is the most excellent of all, and it is closest to God when it is pure. And in the measure that it has clung to him in love in that measure, imbued in some way and illumined by him with light, intelligible light,

4 Plotinus gives the impression here that he believes in a final eschatological vision; in this passage as well: 'How is it, then, that one does not remain there? (LZ: in union with the One) It is because one has not yet totally come out of this world. But there will be a time when the vision will be continuous, since there will no longer be any hindrance by the body' (*Enn.* VI.9.10.1–3). An explanation is not given here of when, how or where that will take place.

the soul discerns—not with physical eyes, but with its own highest part—in which lies excellence, i.e., with its intelligence—those reasons whose vision brings to it full blessedness. These reasons (*rationes*), as was said, may be called ideas, or forms or species, or reasons; and while it is the privilege of many to name them what they wish, it is the privilege of very few to see them in their reality.

De Ideis 2 (Translation: Mosher)

In his exegesis of Gen. 1:26–27,⁵ Augustine also described an ascent by turning to the Creator. Through the Creator's illumination, the soul contemplated the Ideas, gradually acquiring formation. This formation consisted of awareness of God and the Ideas as creation principles, how the creation was made and understanding human consciousness as an image of divine reality. This contemplation also entailed contemplating oneself in light of eternal Virtues⁶ in order to determine one's shortcomings and defects. In this consciousness, a person realized his/her utter dependency on Christ as personal intermediary in order to rise from the world of transient, instable images, to a vision of divine Light, where these images were not present. In his exegesis of the image of God, Augustine showed that the formation of the angelic world of pure intellect served as paradigm for the soul's future development (Chapter 4.3.2.2). The difference here being, that humans would receive their formation—in developing intellectual vision—in the course of their lives—not in one final instance, as the angels, at the time of the original creation act.

In the following quote, Augustine illustrates the importance of contemplating the Ideas as Virtues, simultaneously specifying the details of a complete epistemological ascent from his theory of three visions. The soul passed from physical to spiritual (mental) images to intellectual vision—combined with the element love. This included an understanding or a vision of God.

Moreover, if a man has not only been carried out of the bodily senses to be among the likenesses of the bodies seen by the spirit, but is also carried out of the latter to be conveyed as it were, to the region of the intellectual or intelligible, where transparent truth is seen without any bodily likenesses, his vision is darkened by no cloud of false opinion, and there the virtues of the soul are not tedious and burdensome. For then there is no restraining of lust by the effort of temperance, no bearing of adversity

⁵ Treated in Chapter 4.3; *Gen. litt.* III.20.30–31.

⁶ *Gen. litt.* XII.24.50, 26.54.

by fortitude, no punishing of wicked deeds by justice, no avoiding evil by prudence. The one virtue and the whole of virtue there is to love what you see, and the supreme happiness is to possess what you love. For there, beatitude is imbibed at its source, whence some few drops are sprinkled upon this life of ours, that amid the trials of this world, we may spend our days with temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence. It is surely in pursuit of this end, where there will be secure peace and the unutterable vision of truth, that man undertakes the labor of restraining his desires, of bearing adversities, of relieving the poor, of opposing deceivers. There the brightness of the Lord is seen, not through a symbolic or corporeal vision, as it was seen on Mount Sinai, nor through a spiritual vision such as Isaiah saw and John in the Apocalypse, but through a direct vision and not through a dark image (*sed per speciem, non per aenigmatem*), as far as the human mind elevated by the grace of God speaks face to face to him whom He has made worthy of this communion. And here we are speaking not of the face of the body but that of the mind.

Gen. litt. XII.26.54 (Translation: Taylor)

A *visio intellectualis* corresponded to the capacities or the awareness of the *imago Dei*. This vision, seen while turned to God, the Creator, to his illumination and the Ideas, entailed an immediate intuition of universal truth; a flash of consciousness of immaterial, divine reality; after having risen from physical vision to spiritual vision. Chapter 4.4.3 treated the characteristics of this vision in detail, relating the ways in which one engaged with the *Verbum Dei*. The human will here was not functioning in a broken manner, but optimally, consciously oriented to God. In Christ's illumination, the mind judged itself as well as its intramental images. The *imago Dei* was gradually perfected by the progressive acquisition of permanent knowledge of God through intellectual vision. Augustine indicated that this vision in this life could have various degrees. In the more intense variations it was accompanied by ecstasy or being carried out of the body. In the quote above, Augustine described an intellectual vision which increased in intensity, resulting in a full blown *visio Dei*. Yet the latter would only occur in the afterlife at the time of the resurrection, when the formation of the human images of God would be perfected by the Creator. At that time they would obtain this total blessed vision of God as well as complete knowledge of God. In this state, the human mind would no longer perceive reality *per aenigmata* as in this life now.

Augustine specified in *Gen. litt.* that humans were images of Christ, the Creator, the *Verbum Dei*, the second Trinitarian Person, who will re-create or reform the human image by his grace now and in the afterlife. Hence, Christ was the

source of our formation as well as our eternal destination. The individual soul (*ratio*) endeavored to imitate the *Verbum Dei*-the ultimate Form Principle and the origin of *Rationes aeternae* (Ideas), in his perfect adhesion to God the Father (Chapter 4.2). In his epistemological ascent in *Trin.*,⁷ Augustine posited two kinds of knowledge in the rational soul: *scientia* (as in discursive thinking) and knowledge of the Ideas through intellectual vision to obtain *sapientia* (*Trin.* XI–XIV), as illustrated below.

23. So whenever there is a word (*sermo*) about these I think it is a word of knowledge (*scientia*), to be distinguished from a word of wisdom (*sapientia*) which is concerned with things that neither were nor will be, just are, and which because of eternity in which they are, are talked about as having been and being and going to be without any change of real tense. It is not that they (LZ: the Ideas) were in such a way that they are not yet, but that they always had the same being and always will have it. They do not abide fixed locally in space like bodies, but in non-bodily nature; thus as intelligible they are available to the inspection of the mind just as bodies are visible or touchable to the body's senses. And it is not only the intelligible and non-bodily ideas of sensible localized things that abide without themselves being localized, but also those of movements passing through time that stand unmeasurable in time—these too are intelligible, of course not, sensible. Few have the acuteness of mind to reach these ideas, and when someone does manage as far as possible to attain them he does not abide in them, because his very acuteness of mind gets blunted so to say and beaten back and there is only a transitory thought about a non-transitory thing.

Trin. XII.14.23

As confirmed in Chapter 5.3.8, the two regions of the rational soul and the two kinds of knowledge were parallel to Augustine's types of self-knowledge: *se nosse* and *se cogitare* (*Trin.* IX–X). These terms designated an ascent by knowledge within the human mind: the lower region dealing with the material images, the upper region pertaining to the intellect and the immaterial image of God, which was always oriented to the *Verbum Dei*-Perfect Image of God the Father. Augustine further illustrated an epistemological ascent by human *verba*, truth, obtained in the rational soul. There were (at least) two variations on the *verba*-the lower and higher: the highest would pertain only to

⁷ Treated in Chapter 5.4.4.

the immaterial intellect, the *imago Trinitatis*, which was always focused on the highest truth, the *Verbum Dei*. This particular human *verbum* was, like the eternal *Verbum*, beyond human language, but not eternal or divine, corresponding to intellectual vision which was non-representational.⁸

Augustine's depiction of the ascent by love in *Trin.* consisted of gazing at beautiful material images which inspired love and spiritual longings, such as the desire to know something of deeper significance, beyond mere curiosity. These were awakened in order to enjoy the beauty of this object in a deeper sense (*Trin.* X.1.1 and 1.2).

We must go on now to remove some of the knots and polish some of the roughnesses out of our draft presentation of these matters. But first of all, remembering that absolutely no one can love a thing that is quite unknown, we must carefully examine what sort of love it is that the studious have, that is people who do not yet know but still desire to know some branch of learning. Even over matters where we do not usually talk about studiousness, love commonly results from hearing; thus the spirit is roused of talk of someone's beauty to go and see and enjoy it, since it has a general knowledge of physical beauty, having seen many examples of it, and has something inside by which to judge and approve of what it hungers for outside. When this happens love is not being aroused for something totally unknown, since the kind of thing it is, is known in this way. And when we love a good man whose face we have not seen, we love him out of a knowledge of the virtues which we know in truth itself.

Trin. X.1.1

In this passage, Augustine essentially removes the focus from sense perception and directs the soul's attention inwardly, confronting intramental material images which the soul judges and discerns. The soul was able to contemplate what it loved most in the divine light of Christ and his Ideas (here denoted as truth and virtues).

Augustine posited that one could love God through his Ideas, such as Goodness and Justice (*Trin.* VIII.3.6). As the Ideas existed in the *Verbum Dei*, it followed that one's love for God and for others involved loving Christ. The experience of loving someone had to do with love for ideal qualities in the eter-

8 Treated in Chapter 5.3.8.3; *Trin.* VIII.9.13; IX.7.12–13, 9.14, 11.16 and XV.10.17–18, 11.20, 12.22, 14.24, chapters: 15, 16, 21 and 24.

nal Ideas (*Trin.* VIII.8.12). As such, he indicated that the adage ‘God is love’ involved the Holy Spirit in particular, representing divine Love in the Holy Trinity (XV.19.37). Augustine articulated that proper faith (from Scripture) in what one knows of God yet cannot yet understand, stimulated this love for the Forms (VIII.8.12). The more passionately we loved God, he stated, the more we could ‘see’ or understand God, in other words, through his immutable Forms of Good and Justice. Love was equated with love for the Good and Justice, because God was equated with absolute Good and Justice.

Thus Augustine depicted human love as actualizing and realizing its greatest potential in the intellect which was always focused on God, remembering, understanding and loving God (*Trin.* X.11.17, etc.). Augustine also expounded that enjoying divine love enabled us to love others, as God’s love naturally flowed from one human soul to the other. In the state of mind of worshipping the Holy Trinity, one experienced truth, thus one’s true self.⁹ He used the biblical terms faith, hope and love to underpin his description of the ascent (VIII.9.13, etc.). Hope involved the anticipation of the desired blessed vision in the afterlife, the face-to-face confrontation with God.

Augustine demonstrated that there were two kinds of self-love: self-love based upon external images, and self-love with a more enduring character, based upon the eternal Ideas in the *Verbum* and pertaining to the image of God.¹⁰ He described an ascent through self-love, to the consciousness of the image of God—adhering to God’s unchangeable Love—the underlying unifying force of all life—, and then a step further in the afterlife, to a delightful and sinless unchangeable existence in which God is abundantly present.

Furthermore it (LZ: the mind) would be unable to love itself if it were altogether ignorant of itself; by which image of God in itself it is so powerful that it is able to cleave to Him whose image it is. For it has been established in the order of natures, not of places, that no one save He is above it. Finally, when it shall cleave to Him completely, it will be one spirit, and the Apostle bears witness to this when he says “But he who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit.”, by drawing near, of course, in order to partake of that nature (*participationem naturae*), truth and blessedness, but yet without any increase in Him of His Nature, truth and blessedness. In that nature, therefore, to which the mind will blissfully adhere, it will

9 Treated in Chapter 5.3.9.9: ‘Synthesis of Augustine’s Doctrine of Love’.

10 Treated in Chapter 5.3.9.7. O’Donovan, *Self-Love*, 90–92.

live unchangeably, and all that it sees, it will see as unchangeable. Then as the Divine Scriptures promises, its desire will be satisfied with good things, with unchangeable goods, with the Trinity itself, its God, whose image it is; and that nothing may ever henceforth injure it, it will be in the secret of His Face, so filled with His abundance that it will never find delight in committing sin. But now when it sees itself it does not see anything unchangeable.

Trin. XIV.14.20 (Translation: McKenna)

In *Trin.*, he specified that the higher part of the rational soul, the *imago Dei*, was an image of the second Trinitarian Person in his two natures: that of the eternal Son-Word of God and his Incarnation. In the quote above, Augustine wrote that Christ was just above the human intellect: 'No one save He is above it'. In both his natures, the Son served as a Perfect Image of God, whom human images should imitate.¹¹ Through Christ, the source of illumination and Wisdom, Augustine posited, we come to God the Father and to the contemplation of the Holy Trinity. Although Augustine gave a meticulous demonstration of how the human intellect mirrored the *Sancta Trinitas*, the balance at the end proved that the human trinity dissembled more than resembled the Godhead.¹² Augustine was therefore not emphatic about the idea that humans could truly unite with the Holy Trinity. This was because the Godhead was far too great and therefore distant from the created world. The faculties of reason and intellect which mankind possessed were not equipped to completely embrace it. The Holy Trinity remained a mystery. It seemed that Augustine preferred the articulation of the possibility of a union with the Holy Trinity through one's contemplation of and unification with the second Person, Christ, as intermediary, due to the intelligibility of the Forms and his incarnate life.¹³ This unification included receiving the gifts of love and desire from the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Thus the contemplation of Christ encompassed reflection on his human life as well as his equality in the Godhead with the other two Persons. It was by Christ's grace that we humans were permitted a glimpse of God or the Trinity in this life, as well as in the afterlife at the resurrection.

¹¹ *Trin.* IV.3.6; VII.3.5; XV.11.20–21.

¹² *Trin.* XV chapters 12–15; XV.20.39.

¹³ E.g., *Trin.* XIII.19.24. Treated in Chapter 5.4.6: 'God's Intelligibility and Incomprehensibility'.

¹⁴ *Trin.* XV.17.31, 18.32, etc.

4 General Similarities

The common aspects in the accounts of the ascent by Augustine and Plotinus were: the inward turn—from the material level of the senses, to the most immaterial and divine. The image of God, as intellect, was an elevated state of consciousness, always focused on contemplating the Ideas of God. In order to intensify the actualization of the intellect, one strived to distance oneself from the physical images in our world. Augustine and Plotinus both agreed that one cannot grasp or visualize God with 'material images'. The kind of things observed with the discursive frame of mind or in the memory would entail embracing God in an illusory way. God could not be truly associated with anything material, sense-oriented, transient or immutable. Discursive thinking entailed grasping one or two concepts at a time or successively in contrast to the immediate intuition of the divine vision. Lower reason made up self-consciousness (in this sense, the historical self or personality). Thinking, knowledge and understanding could be elevated to higher reason and immaterial intellectual contemplation. The latter entailed stepping out of discursive thinking (Augustine specified with the grace given by Christ) and comprehending God by contemplation of the eternal Forms. The Forms originated in the second divine Person/Hypostasis. Through intellectual vision—the immediate and intuitive apprehension of God's Light—God became more and more intelligible for humans. Self-Referencing was a characteristic of the second Person/Hypostasis¹⁵ and accordingly, this Self-Referencing was mirrored in the self-knowledge of human images of God (albeit to a lesser degree of unity and perfection). This enabled them to understand themselves in light of their relationship to God, to the extent that was possible. The vision of God's Light involved a purer consciousness than ordinary awareness, without being dominated by time and space. The consciousness of the image of God was thus differentiated from worldly knowledge, although worldly knowledge too could lead to truth. Yet only the image–intellect was able to acquire Wisdom, in its ascent back to the source. The first contact with the ultimate source was made through the second divine Person/Hypostasis, which drew the seeker to a certain awareness of the first divine Person/Hypostasis, the ultimate Father. The ascent of the human soul to God for both thinkers was consistently vertical, even though Augustine's triune Godhead was horizontal and non-hierarchical.

For both thinkers, the ascent to God through love and intensified desire was actually a more effective, faster route of the ascent than accumulating

¹⁵ *Trin.* XV.14,23, 21.40, 23.43; e.g. *Enn.* V.3.5.

knowledge. The end point was also 'enjoying God' or worshipping God, which culminated in a divine vision of immediate understanding, combined with intense joy. The ascent, involving an immaterial vision of the divine, intelligible Light, could be followed by the recognition of the incomprehensible character of the magnitude of the all-one Godhead. God was the source of all human manifestations of knowledge and love. Both thinkers treated love and knowledge in the following ascending order: physicality, immateriality, intellectual intelligibility and lastly, incomprehensibility. Augustine also depicted Christ as bringing believers to the contemplation of the Trinity and to intellectual vision. This echoed Plotinus' notion of Λόγος which drew the soul to the contemplation of Νοῦς, in which the desire to know the One was increasingly augmented.¹⁶

Another particular similarity between Augustine and Plotinus to mention here, in light of God's ultimate incomprehensibility, was the absolute conviction of the human mind's ability to grasp and know God. The mind could only conceive and grasp God as far as the mind was able to grasp itself. Yet the human mind, filled with countless multifarious images, was impossible to fully fathom. Through obtaining knowledge of God, by becoming more of an image of God, self-awareness increased. Both thinkers were convinced as well that in grasping or knowing the divine, we could perceive God in some way as existing in our higher mind. This afforded some kind of indication of what God truly was: something which was ineffable and ultimately unattainable. Humans could not truly purge themselves of their inner material and worldly images or their discursive thinking as long as their soul was embodied. For both thinkers, this was clearly a source of frustration. Yet both were optimistic of the soul's potential to experience intellectual vision, a momentary elevation above materially oriented consciousness, an encounter with God which could be accompanied by delight and ecstasy.

The fact that both thinkers expounded that the human mind could grasp this very truth was significant. On the other hand, their position was that the human grasp of the realm of the divine was not a claim to being or becoming a god. (This statement would entail of course, neutralizing Plotinus' claim of the intellect's divinity to an ambitious ideal or wishful thinking.) Through this vision, the soul could not claim an existence within the Godhead itself, at least as long as it was still living in this world. One's actualization of the intellect increased the possible co-existence of the Godhead in the human mind, which

16 A. Pigler, 'Possibilité *logos* henologique', 189–209; M. Fattal, 'Beauté et métaphysique', 301–313.

however could never entail an equal co-habitation, due to the simple postulation that an image was never equal to that what it imaged.

The points of similarities included the way in which both Plotinus and Augustine formulated their notions of the ascent to the Godhead: it was exploratory and often entailed confirming paradoxes instead of concrete affirmations. God was experienced as ultimate Beauty and Love. The pursuit of true knowledge and true love went hand in hand. The perception of such brought about a conception of oneself beyond the historical self, the person one longed to become: a more godlike being—the true self. P. Cary remarks that scholars often claim that Augustine's accounts of the ascent developed from intellectual to love, implying that intellectual was cold and rational and that love involved the heart, feelings and warmth. Cary rightly concludes that this is foreign to Augustine and argues against both.¹⁷ This conclusion is equally applicable to Plotinus' account of the ascent.

5 Gray Areas

5.1 *Self-Actualization*

Augustine's doctrine of grace, which entailed the soul's necessity of divine assistance to return to God, echoes throughout his major works. We saw this in particular in his doctrine of love when he wrote: 'Man has no capacity to love except from God.' (*Trin.* xv.17.31). One of Augustine's crucial points of criticism of Platonists, as relayed in Chapter 2, was their boasting of contemplating the Ideas and ascending to God as a result of their own efforts of purification.¹⁸ However, in *Civ. Dei* ix.17, Augustine recognized that Porphyry and later Neo-Platonists did in fact acknowledge the necessity of divine assistance. Yet their theurgical practices of acquiring that assistance through demons were completely objectionable to him. His rebuke of relying on one's own efforts would seem to boil down to Plotinus, who did suggest in many passages that the soul was entirely responsible for its actualization.

For example, Plotinus often mentioned that the soul needed to prepare itself for Νοῦς. 'Perhaps, then, we ought to teach our soul how Intellect contemplates itself and teach that part of the soul which is in some way intellectual ...' (*Enn.* v.3.19). It could not ascend to the One without further necessary purification. For Plotinus the glimpse of the Ideas was in itself a means of purifying the soul

17 *Inner Grace, Augustine in the Traditions of Plato and Paul* (Oxford Scholarship Online, May 2008) 5.

18 *Conf. e.g.*, vii.16, 17 and 20; *Trin.* iv.15, 20.

(for example in *Enn.* v.1.10.15–18). Contemplating Virtues served as well as a means of self-purification which would lead to approaching the moral perfection of the Godhead.¹⁹ Below is a classic passage illustrating this in Plotinus' treatise *On Beauty* which Augustine in all likelihood read:

So that the soul must be trained first of all to look at beautiful ways of life; ... How then can you see the sort of beauty a good soul has? Go back into yourself and look; and if you do not yet see yourself beautiful, then, just as someone making a statue which has to be beautiful cuts away here and polishes there and makes one part smooth and clears another till he has given his statue a beautiful face, so you too must cut away excess and straighten the crooked and clear the dark and make it bright, and never stop "working on your statue", till the divine glory of virtue shines out on you, till you see "self-mastery enthroned" upon its holy seat.

Enn. 1.6.9.3, 7–15

Can we assume that the exhortation to utilize one's own inner strength to return to the divine is more prominent in Plotinus than in Augustine? Typical of Plotinus, he also expressed unambiguously that it was the divine which called back its constituents back to itself (*Enn.* v.3.17.15–40, vi.7.23.1–5). Plotinus also emphasized often that the individual soul was dependent upon *Noûs* for its ascent and renewed consciousness.²⁰ Hadot underscored that Plotinus did not intend the mystical union to have been achieved by one's own strength.²¹ Thus an immediate affirmation of a distinct difference here is not possible.

On the other hand, could we say that Augustine differed from Plotinus by his assertion that intellectual vision (as depicted in the experiences of divine Light in *Conf.*) and especially the contemplation of the Ideas in which a divine vision was incurred, was initiated by God?²² Plotinus did not go as far as to posit explicit personal divine intervention in the world.²³ Yet, as we saw ear-

19 E.g., *Enn.* 1.2.1., 1.6.9., v.1.10.15–18.

20 E.g., *Enn.* v.8.3.17, 10.23–26, 11 and 12; v.9.2.21–23, throughout vi.8 and vi.9, etc.

21 Substantiated by *Enn.* vi.7.36.17 and v.3.17.28. Hadot, *Simplicité*, 104–106.

22 *Conf.* vii.10.16–17.23, vii.20.26, ix.10.23–26, xi.9.11; *Gen. litt.* xii.26.54.

23 Porphyry writes in the *Life of Plotinus* 23: 'To Plotinus "the goal ever near was to be shown": for his end and goal was to be united with God, who is over all things. Four times while I was with him he attained that goal, in an unspeakable actuality and not in potency only. Also it is said that the gods often set him straight when he was going on crooked course "sending down a solid shaft of light", which means that he wrote what he wrote under their inspection and supervision.' Armstrong comments (*Enneads* 1, 71): 'Note that Porphyry attributes his master's achievement predominantly to divine inspiration and guidance.'

lier,²⁴ he did depict the attractive forces of Beauty of the One (χάρις—grace or charm) as internalized in the form of all beautiful material objects. These forces incurred the desire in the human soul to return to the ultimate source of all that is beautiful and lovable. Love and Desire for the One, transmitted from Νοῦς to the Soul and human souls, were also instrumental in awakening the soul to the higher spheres (*Enn.* VI.7.22.15–22).

Furthermore, the Λόγος, far from being a ‘personage’, manifested as a divine force in physical beauty (*Enn.* I.6.2.27–28) as well as in the human soul’s reasoning capacity. It pulled one’s attention back to God.²⁵ Thus the divine in Plotinus was not entirely passive to the world under it and in particular to the inner reality of human souls. Moreover, Augustine would agree that conscious efforts were likewise imperative on the part of the individual to establish a relationship with God. He advocated practicing turning to God, spiritual exercises, praying, singing, reading the Bible, imitating Christ, etc. These activities implied exercising the good will, which was originally broken by original sin but could be healed progressively by Christ. Augustine’s doctrine of grace would dictate that all these human acts of good will or charity were a gift from God, initiated by God. However it is feasible to assume that Plotinus would not have disapproved of Augustine’s doctrine of grace. Plotinus did highlight personal initiative. Yet even with his doctrine of grace, Augustine essentially did the same. Therefore, the point of self-actualization would constitute in my opinion more of a gray area than a major difference between Augustine and Plotinus. A facet of this discussion will continue in 6. ‘Christ’s assistance in Contemplation’ as a major difference between Augustine and Plotinus.

5.2 *The Divinity of the Soul*

The divinity of the intellect which Plotinus sometimes professed has already been discussed several times in the course of this study. We will resume with the discussion from Chapter 7.3 and 4, now in the context of the ascent. But first we will review the main points there. In Chapter 7, the hypothesis was made that although Plotinus posited the divinity of the soul, there were so many aspects of Plotinus’ epistemology, his doctrine of intellect and imaging which Augustine

This had little support from the *Enneads*. Plotinus normally thinks that the philosopher can attain to the divine level without this sort of special assistance.’ Armstrong remarks correctly that there is little evidence in *Enn.* of personal ‘divine assistance’. (See Plotinus’ amusing reference to ‘divine assistance’: as being pulled upwards by Athena pulling one’s hair *Enn.* VI.5.7.14–15.) Generally, the ‘assistance’ is inherent in the attractive forces of the divine when one is attuned to them, as I have demonstrated above.

²⁴ See Chapters 3.4.7; 8.2 and 3.

²⁵ Fattal, ‘Beauté et métaphysique’.

had borrowed, that it all boiled down to one difference: in the eyes of Augustine, Plotinus failed to explicate the demarcation line between the individual intellect, the image, and its divine source, Intellect. In the passages where the divinity of the soul or the total glimpse of the intelligible world was mentioned, an explanation of the feasibility of such was always absent. Elsewhere in the *Enneads* in other contexts, he did suggest the differences between a human and divine Intellect, but usually only in short, fleeting statements (Chapter 3.3).

Plotinus did in fact demarcate the difference between the divine and material worlds in his cosmology, and rather distinctly in his doctrine of imaging. For this reason, I did not label this point in 7.3 as a 'major doctrinal difference'. For another reason as well: Plotinus did explain how egoism, self-isolation and excessive self-orientation were damaging to the soul; yet in the eyes of Augustine he would have failed to sufficiently draw out the importance of humility in order to attain the beatific vision of God. This was due to Plotinus' ignorance of the Incarnation of Christ. The latter was indeed a point of major discrepancy.

It was also pointed out in Chapter 7 on the divinity of the soul that Plotinus made his accounts of the ascent appear easy; no obstacles seem to stand in the way between the human intellect and the divine Intellect. However, Plotinus did describe the obstacles existing in the lower soul. For instance, when she chose not to actualize her inherent potential to become one with God and assimilate the divine. Or by sinning or lending excessive attention to the body or material things. In that sense, Plotinus recognized the problem of the human will, as mentioned in that section, without necessarily expounding it so elaborately as Augustine's doctrine of *voluntas*. In contrast to Plotinus, Augustine explicitly stated that the *voluntas* was ill and required healing by Christ. Augustine also emphasized the personal relationship of the Word, Christ with humans (*Trin.* IV.2.4, etc.).

Plotinus' explicit statements on the divinity of the soul, and the misleading facility with which he relayed the ascent of the soul to Νοῦς, were only one part of the whole story. His portrayal of the soul's unification with the One relayed doubts and ambiguities as well. For instance, the One did not automatically appear to the human soul, one had to prepare for it and await its arbitrary revelation (*Enn.* VI.7.34.1–15). Plotinus even suggested that the Νοῦς in its limitless longing to unite with the One resulted in unrequited gratification. (See Chapter 3.4.6: 'The Failure of the Νοῦς'.) The ascent to the One was even for Plotinus himself a seldom occurring event (*Life of Plotinus*, 23). Even if Plotinus thought the soul was divine, the ascent to the One was not as self-evident as the ascent to the Intellect. For these reasons too, I would neither regard Plotinus' claims of the divinity of the soul as major points of difference between the doctrines of the two thinkers, but as a gray area, with the same justification as above,—due

to the church father's abundant borrowing of elements from Plotinus' doctrine of the soul, the immaterial intellect and the Godhead. Armstrong, as one of the few, affirms this as well.²⁶ Augustine apparently did not consider Plotinus' doctrine of the soul such a major difference either, otherwise he would have attacked Plotinus on these points instead of extensively praising him in *Civ. Dei*. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Augustine was nonetheless acutely aware of these discrepancies in Plotinus' doctrine of intellect, which are accounted for in Augustine's own depiction of the ascent—as in the *imago Trinitatis* to the Holy Trinity, which will be more evident in the upcoming subsections.

6 Major Differences

6.1 *Christ's Assistance in Contemplation*

The personal human element in the Godhead, already deemed as one of the major differences (Chapter 6.4), constitutes in the context of the ascent a significant difference as well. As stated in that chapter, in Augustine's doctrine, Christ, not just as the eternal Son of God, but as a human of flesh and blood, played an emphatically personal role in one's contemplation and intellectual vision.²⁷ This was obviously absent in the *Enneads*. Christ was needed as Mediator up until the final vision or contemplation of God in the afterlife, when, as Augustine suggested, all our desires will be gratified.

In that contemplation then God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28) because nothing further will be desired of him; to be illumined and rejoiced by him will be enough. ... For we shall contemplate God the Father and Son and Holy Spirit when the mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5) has handed over the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24) and hence no longer intercedes for us as mediator and priest ...

Trin. 1.10.21

26 'There are good reasons for not making the contrast between pagan thought and Christian thought on the divinity of the soul too unqualifying and sharp.' 'St. Augustine and Christian Platonism', 8–9.

27 'The fact is that 'the man Jesus Christ mediator of God and men' (1 Tim. 2:5.) now reigning for all "the just" who live by faith (Heb. 2:4.) is going to bring them to the direct sight of God, to the "face-to-face vision" as the Apostle calls it (1 Cor 13:12). That is what is meant by "When he hands the kingdom over to God and the father" as though to say "When he brings believers to a direct contemplation of God the Father."' (*Trin.* 1.8.16).

Thus at the end of time, Christ will endow saintly souls with their formation, which is the same knowledge which the angels possessed.²⁸ He specified that Christ will transform human images of God at the resurrection to become equal to himself, because he also had a physical body in his life on earth (*Trin.* XIV.18.24). Augustine added that human beings will not be equal to him in his divine nature. The exterior aspect is impossibly Plotinian, as already mentioned—in Greek philosophy, the incarnation of a God was considered unfeasible. Yet for Augustine, although it is the outward manifestation of the Son that leads humans to him, it is nonetheless the inner contemplation of the *Verbum* which will transform faith to the understanding of invisible, universal truths and by which eternity will take possession of human mortality (*Trin.* IV.18.24).

Augustine made further use of elements of exteriority in order to reach inner, ultimate truth. Knowledge of God was also delivered through the Scriptures, which constituted an exterior *scientia*. Faith, likewise considered by Augustine as *scientia*, was instrumental in bringing one to *sapientia*. However in order to attain the deeper meaning of biblical texts—the *sapientia*—and in order for faith to be replaced by understanding, a psychological transformation was required. This was brought about by the Word's assistance in his eternal nature as equal to the human Christ (*Trin.* XIII.9.12, 10.14). In combination with this personal element present in Augustine's account of the ascent, we could include Augustine's urging to imitate the 'descent' of the *Verbum Dei* in order to ascend and return to God. Here he was speaking predominantly of imitating the humility exhibited by the Word's Incarnation as Jesus Christ.²⁹ As stated in *Conf.* VII.9.13–14, the Platonists missed the point of the lifelong 'descent to humility', because of their ignorance of Christ. These kinds of exterior or personal elements to aid in the ascent were clearly absent in Plotinus.

6.2 *Scripture and Revelation*

Recalling Augustine's criticism of the Platonists in *Trin.* IV (Chapter 2.2), there he mentioned no particular names of philosophers as he did in *Civ. Dei*, yet the bulk of this critique pointed directly to the practitioners of theurgy and the Platonists who had expressed their critique of Christians. This point did not apply to Plotinus, yet there was another point which undeniably did in *Trin.* IV.16.21.³⁰

28 *Gen. litt.* VI.19.30–24.41, VI.21.30.

29 *Trin.* IV.10.13. The ascent also entailed Christ's ascension, his return to heaven and his resurrection, which humans would imitate at the death of their physical bodies.

30 '... their ability to understand the sublime and unchanging substance of God by the things that are made ... they can show very truly by the most persuasive arguments and convinc-

His critique was that their contemplation of the Ideas and true understanding of the nature of God did not afford them an overview of the history of mankind. Augustine was thinking here of the history of the world in the creation story in Genesis, the lives of Adam and Eve and the consequences of their sins for the whole of mankind. He also had in mind the glimpse into the far future provided by the letters of Paul, Revelations of John, etc.: in particular, the resurrection which humans could anticipate in the afterlife, in imitating the death and resurrection of Christ in his human Gestalt. The final blessed vision and the total contemplation of God in the afterlife were taught as well in these biblical texts.³¹ In sum, compared to the account of ascent and the highest vision of God of Plotinus, Augustine differed in that he saw the Old and New Testaments as indispensable references for the return to God. The ancient texts of Plato which Plotinus interpreted, did supply a legend concerning the beginning of time (such as the myth of Atlantis) and some eschatological information about reincarnation. A significant difference here was that the authority of the Holy Scriptures was legitimized by sacred revelation: the revelations of the wisdom of the divine Christ (*Trin.* 111.11.27, 11.1.2, etc.).

ing proofs that all temporal things happen according to eternal ideas ... Small wonder, then, that they have not been able in any way to investigate the unfolding of the ages that stretch out ahead of us, or the turning point of the outward course which carries the human race down the river, and the return from there to the end that is due to each one. ... Nor have these philosophers contemplated such things, even though they are superior to others in their understanding of the supreme eternal Ideas.' (*Trin.* IV.16.21).

'... So then we should not consult the philosophers about the future succession of the ages or the resurrection of the dead, not even those who have understood to the best of their ability the eternity of the Creator in whom we live and move and are (Acts 17:28), because knowing God by the things that that are made, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks but calling themselves wise they have become fools (Rom. 1:20). They were not capable, of course, of fixing the keen gaze of their intellects so constantly on the eternity of that spiritual and unchanging nature that they could see in the wisdom of the creator and ruler of the universe, the rolled up scrolls of the centuries, which *there* already are and always are, but *here* only will be and so are not yet; or that they could see there the change for the better, not only of minds but also of the bodies of men, each to its own perfection. Not only were they quite incapable of seeing these things there, they were not either considered worthy of having them declared to them by holy angels, whether outwardly through the bodily senses or by interior revelations impressed on their spirits. This, though, is how these things were shown to our fathers, who were marked with true piety ...,' (*ibidem*, IV.17.23).

- 31 *Gen. litt.* XII; Treated in Chapter 4.4. Augustine's example of beatific vision: 'The one virtue and the whole of virtue there, is to love what you see and the supreme happiness is to possess what you love. An unutterable vision of truth, where beatitude is imbibed at its source ... the brightness of the Lord is seen ... through a direct vision.' (*Gen. litt.* XII.26.54).

Kenny asserts correctly that for Augustine, the quotidian task of meditation upon Scripture and saturating the soul in the divine Word would eradicate some effects of the fall.³² However Kenny goes so far as to claim that Augustine replaced philosophical dialectic with scriptural reflection. From the perspective of *Trin.*, Kenny's observation is untenable. Augustine did not dispose of philosophical dialectic or contemplation for the sake of Scripture. He integrated the two. Poque's comment is also feasible: that the 'dialectic in degrees' expressed in Augustine points to Plotinus' *Enn.* 1.3.1.1–18.³³

6.3 *On Contemplating the Ideas*

Augustine never spoke of a full glimpse of the entire intelligible world as Plotinus did. Perhaps he meant that a full glimpse of only certain individual Ideas was possible at one instance, as he demonstrated in *Trin.* VIII.3.4, in his exposition on love for the Forms Love, Good and Justice as a means of loving God. Even though Augustine did borrow Plotinus' notion of the intellect as equal to the intelligible (Chapter 7.2), Augustine's conception did not picture a complete union of the human intellect with the intelligible world.³⁴ He did prescribe a participation with the *Verbum Dei* which was not total in this life, yet would indeed be in the afterlife. Armstrong points out that in Augustine there was also no glorification of the soul contemplating the intelligible world as it was sometimes portrayed by Plotinus.³⁵ For example: 'And again, this illumination (of the Νοῦς) gives the soul a clearer life, but a life which is not generative; on the contrary it turns the soul back upon itself and does not allow it to disperse, but makes it satisfied with the glory in itself ...' (*Enn.* v.3.8.28–30). Nor would Augustine claim that 'we are the intelligible universe' as in the following example from Plotinus: 'From these forms, from which the soul alone receives its lordship over the living being, come reasonings, opinions and acts of intuitive intelligence; and this is precisely where "we" are. That which comes before this is "ours" but "we", in our presidency over the living being are what extends from this point upwards.' (*Enn.* 1.1.7.14–15). Although we could say that Plotinus neutralized these statements in other passages, Augustine never glorified the human soul or intellect; he only glorified Christ.

32 J.P. Kenny, 'Faith and Reason', *CCA* (2014) 275–291, 288.

33 S. Poque, 'L'expression de l'anabase plotinienne dans la prédication de St. Augustine et ses sources', *Recherches Augustiniennes* (10) 1975, 187–215. Poque discusses here *Sermo* 52.16–17; *En. Ps.* 41.7; *Io. eu. tr.* 20.11–13. See also G. Madec, '*Ascensio, ascensus*', *A-L*, vol. 1, 466–475, 471.

34 Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 48–52.

35 Armstrong claims that Plotinus glorified the intelligible world, such as in: *Enn.* v.8.4.7–10; VI.7.12.22–30; or III.4.3.22 ('Earthly Beauties', 72–76).

As mentioned earlier on the sections on the divinity of the soul, Augustine drew a clearer demarcation line between the human and divine mind than Plotinus. The latter seemed to sometimes posit an automatic and direct affinity of the human intellect with the divine. In Augustine there was also no suggestion of becoming divine by the experience of intellection or even a unification with the Godhead—at least in this life, as sometimes portrayed in a momentary vision in the *Enneads*.³⁶ Nor did Augustine view the contemplation of God as an event which would temporarily dismember the human in its finite state.³⁷ This point leads us directly to the next question: to what extent did Augustine and Plotinus specify that the intellect could unite with the Godhead?

6.4 *On Unification with the Godhead*

It is assumed by many researchers that in Augustine's early works (for example in *Div. qu.* 49: *De Ideis*), he depicted a more optimistic conception of how a human could contact God.³⁸ In fact, the ascent to God in *De Ideis* was relayed as being of great ease and without complications of the will (Chapter 4.4.2). Augustine's later accounts of the ascent to God in *Trin.*, as in *Conf.* VII, were often followed by an exposition on the hardships of remaining focused on God.

Come see if you can, O "soul weighed down with the body that decays" (Wis. 9:15) and burdened with many and variable earthly thoughts, come and see it if you can—God's truth. For it is written that God is Light (John 1:1–5) not such as these eyes see, but as the mind sees when it hears "He is truth". Do not ask what truth is; immediately a fog of bodily images and a cloud of fancies will get in your way and disturb the bright fair weather that burst on you the first instant when I said "truth". Come, hold it in that first moment in which so to speak you caught a flash from the corner of your eye when the word "truth" was spoken, stay there if you can. But you cannot, you slide back into these familiar and earthly things. And what weight is it, I ask, that drags you back but the birdlime of greed for the dirty junk you have picked up on your wayward wanderings?³⁹

Trin. VIII.2.3

36 'Our soul then is a divine thing and of a nature different [from the things of sense], like the universal nature of soul and the human soul is perfect when it has intellect,' (*Enn.* V.1.10–14).

37 Brachtendorf, *Struktur*, 38–39, 91; *Enn.* VI.8.7.46–54.

38 E.g., J. Brachtendorf, *Augustins Confessiones* (Darmstadt, 2005) 146–154.

39 See also *Trin.* XV.27.50, II.1.1, etc.

The ascent by contemplation of the Forms, on the other hand, was usually depicted by Augustine as relatively unproblematic, as the Godhead was to a considerable extent intelligible to the human mind, as he expounded in *Trin.* VIII.3.4. (As stressed in the previous subsection, this did not necessarily include a glimpse of the whole intelligible world at once.) Yet what it comes down to is this: Augustine did not posit an ‘ascent to the Trinity’, as authors as M. Clark suggest.⁴⁰ However Brachtendorf makes the following remark: ‘Dagegen zeigt sich in *De Trinitate*, dass aufgrund der besonderen ontologischen Struktur der Dreifaltigkeit der Aufstieg als Mittel der Erkenntnis unbrauchbar wird und durch Analogieüberlegungen zu ersetzen ist.’⁴¹ By claiming that Augustine had rendered divine Trinitarian structure as a means of a personal ascent by knowledge useless, and that he replaced it with mental exercise, Brachtendorf is shooting beyond the target. Yet this remark does contain a grain of truth. For Augustine did in fact present the special ontological structure of the Holy Trinity as well as the intelligible factors of the unity of the Godhead as useful tools for contemplation and mental exercise. Yet Augustine also positively affirmed in *Trin.* that we *could* truly unite with God.⁴² However this did not involve a unification with the Holy Trinity in the sense that the three elements of the mind would be one with three divine Persons.⁴³ He did specify that if we longed to be with God, our longings will take us to God and that God’s love would fulfill us.⁴⁴ Enjoying and experiencing God—even if it is limited to momentary visions—will result in becoming happy in this life (*Trin.* XIII.7.10).

Augustine also did not admit to the possibility of becoming a perfect image of God in this life.⁴⁵ This perfection would be attained in the afterlife when the *Verbum* re-formed or re-created the human image. Instead he emphasized a potentially increasing contact with the second and third Persons and spoke of a vision of the Trinity by the human mind in terms of participation with the Light of Christ, the *Verbum Dei*. The vision of the Trinity could not help but be incomplete, his argument being that something as great and all-encompassing as the divine Trinity was simply beyond reach for the human mind. The nor-

40 M. Clark, in her otherwise excellent summary ‘*De Trinitate*’, *CCA* (2001) 91–102 writes on p. 91 and p. 98 that Augustine speaks of ‘uniting with God’. Clark’s statements require more nuances.

41 *Struktur*, 125.

42 *Trin.* XIV.14.20; also XIV.14.18.

43 *Trin.* xv. ch’s. 12–15, xv.20.39; Ayres points out that in *Ep.* 120.11–12, Augustine describes three kinds of visions (as his theory in *Gen. litt.* xii) and suggests that our contemplation of the Trinity is either of the third kind or simply transcends all three (Ayres, *Trinity*, 149).

44 *Trin.* xv.28.51; and as treated in Chapter 8 on Love.

45 *Gen. litt.* xii.28.32 and 36 and throughout *Trin.*

mal, rational way of human thinking—including intellectual vision—simply could not embrace such a magnitude. Furthermore humans were unable to wholly disperse with material attachments. The latter stifled the growth process of seeing and resembling God. The material mind with its sense perception certainly could not do it; the non-representational ability of the intellect could only catch a glimpse of the Trinity in itself. The reflection of the Trinity in our own mind would not tell us everything about the divine Trinity, as the divine Trinity operated in a way much differently from ours.⁴⁶ This did not mean that Augustine posited participation with the Holy Trinity as completely impossible, as M. Wisse concludes.⁴⁷ Augustine did show in *Trin.* that the contemplation of the divine Trinity, as well as an intelligible grasp (a participation), was to some degree possible, although this did not entail a totality of any sort. Augustine encouraged trying to imagine the Trinity—to attempt to imagine what we cannot grasp. Yet he warned that this would mostly end up in illusions and phantasms because of our generally materialistic way of visualization.⁴⁸ The difficulties here also had to do with the present life in which human souls were affected by original sin and *superbia*.

Thus he urged not only spiritual exercises but also ‘searching and finding’, the motif in *Trin.*, as piecemeal gratification to experience God (Chapter 5.3 and 4). He also encouraged his readers to remain open for experiences of God as Trinity: to persist in the search for God endlessly, because our knowledge of God and experience of his Love grew continuously. Praying to God and exposing one’s heart was a form of intellectual vision. By means of purifying the human image, becoming holy, developing the intellect and acquiring a conscious resemblance of that which it images, the intellect could indeed approach union. As I argued in Chapter 5.4, the qualification of ‘failure’ applied to Augustine’s accounts of the ascent by many scholars is inappropriate. Always longing for a lengthier and greater clarity of the vision and *not* fully attaining the intensity one desires, made up a part of one’s relationship to God. Becoming similar to God—becoming godlike—consisted of a gradual process.

In Augustine’s eyes, Plotinus failed to impose the necessary limits on intellectual vision of God in respect to the soul’s kinship to *Noûs*. Yet Plotinus did not claim that becoming a god was the result of actualization of the intellect. His accounts of union with the *Noûs* and the One were sometimes described in terms of being possessed by a god, yet they were also sometimes followed

46 Treated in Chapter 5.4.3; *Trin.* XV.12.22, 14.23–24, 15.25–26.

47 M. Wisse’s departure point is Augustine’s view on God as entailing exclusively incomprehensibility (*Participation*, 11–12).

48 Treated in Chapter 5.3; i.e., *Trin.* I.1.1; I.6.11, XI.1.1, etc.

by an account of the descent, an unwilling return to the consciousness of one's normal self.⁴⁹ Plotinus' depictions of the ascent to the Intellect were presented as relatively unproblematic. Yet the ascent to the One was of greater difficulty. Compared to Plotinus, Augustine posited a more realistic distinction between the human image—as creature—and the Godhead as Creator. The difficulties for assimilating the divine in Augustine's thinking were not just limited to the impossibility of surpassing the natural ontological distinction between the Creator and the creature. The problem lay deeply in the bosom of mankind itself: a tragic brokenness caused by original sin and a rebellious attitude towards the Creator. As a result, the soul could not master the body. It—as well as the world—was so permeated with carnal sin that humans could not understand God in this life any better than peering through a dark glass and enigmas (1 Cor. 13:12). Statements such as these were repeated often throughout *Trin.*, such as in XV.25.45. Theoretically, Plotinus would not have disagreed with these statements, yet Augustine would have argued that his *Enneads* did not address these issues sufficiently.

Augustine strived to formulate a more sufficient explanation of the relationship between God and mankind in order to fill in the gaps of Plotinus' philosophy of intellect and the ascent, which he otherwise found praiseworthy. He used the story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis to posit a general fall of mankind which served as well as a departure point for his analysis of human nature, love and desires.⁵⁰ He showed how the human will, in its drive for love and knowledge could go wrong in a number of different ways. The basis of this sinning for Augustine was *aversio Dei*, turning away from God, which was a Plotinian notion as well. For Plotinus, the 'fall of the soul',⁵¹ which essentially involved the soul's descent from the divine world into a physical body, was also partially to blame for the human struggles in desiring the return to God.

In sum, in order to correct Plotinus, as well as to fill in the deficiencies of the great Neo-Platonist's doctrine, Augustine assured his readers that the complete experience of divine Love, the full acquisition of perfect divine knowledge and wisdom, such as the kind which was depicted in Plotinus' doctrine of intellect were impossible to attain in this life. Plotinus' optimistic depictions of intellectual vision resembled more Augustine's descriptions of the final vision in the

49 *Enn.* VI.7.34.24–end, 35.1–3.

50 Treated in Chapter 2.1.10 on the will: 'The Inward Turn and the Ascent (1)' from *Conf.* VII–VIII; Chapter 4.3.2.5: 'Original Sin and the Human Will'; and Chapter 4.3.2.6: 'Sin, Pride in the Context of Love and Knowledge' in the framework of Augustine's Genesis commentaries.

51 Throughout *Enn.* IV, e.g., IV.3.4.15; see Chapter 3.3.6 on Plotinus ('Matter, Evil, Sin and Error').

afterlife when the human image of God obtained the same knowledge of the angels. Augustine scorned those who claimed to have achieved this or to have reached perfection in this life (*Trin.* XI.5.8, XII.11.16), accusing them of *superbia*.

An experience of God involved a momentary yet profound union with Christ, who would bring souls to contemplate the Trinity. This union included a glimpse into the second divine Person's intelligible world, assisted by Christ's own illumination, which permitted the insight of the resemblances and as well as dissemblance with God.⁵² We remained images of Christ engaged in a process of progressive development yet will only merge completely with Christ at the end of time. Through this union, humans will participate more deeply in the Holy Trinity as well.

6.5 *Eschatology: When and How Can We Become Godlike? Reincarnation versus Resurrection*

Plotinus' doctrine of reincarnation was given little attention in this study. Because of the stark differences between Plotinus' views on the afterlife and Christian eschatology or Augustine's interpretation of Scripture, this point deserves only a brief mentioning within the discussion of the major differences.

Plotinus did not devote much space to the subject on reincarnation (*Enn.* III.4.2, IV.3.9). His theory was only mentioned in passing in this study (Chapters 2 and 3) in the context of *anamnese*: as remembering what one saw of the Ideas in between incarnations. Plotinus depicted becoming godlike in a number of successive reincarnations, afterwards earning the existence in a heavenly realm.⁵³ He did sometimes mention judgment and punishment in Hades in the afterlife (*Enn.* I.7.3.13–14). His comments on reincarnation generally followed the account of his teacher, Plato. When one did not attain the goal and led a bad life, then future reincarnations were expected. When one behaved in a beastly manner, then reincarnation into an animal was one of the possible consequences. However he did not speculate further on matters, regarding, for example, what would happen when one is 'redeemed', or when one would become a divinity, or other eschatological issues. He did suggest that there would be a time when intellectual vision would be more enduring. 'How is it, then, that one does not remain there? (LZ: in union with the One) It is because one has not yet totally come out of this world. But there will be a time when the vision will be continuous, since there will no longer be any hindrance by

52 Would the vision in the afterlife, according to Augustine, furnish perfected human images of God with complete knowledge of the second divine Person, the Creator-Christ or complete knowledge of the Holy Trinity?

53 Heaven οὐρανός is described in *Enn.* V.1.2 and more extensively in V.8.3.28–end-4. Οὐρανός is the intelligible world, inhabited by gods.

the body.' (*Enn.* VI.9.10.1–3). Yet there is no speculation given about when, how or where that will take place.

Nor did he attempt to explain the consequences of his account of the unification with the One for his future life. Did these brief moments of union bring about a complete salvation from reincarnation and from the material life? Accordingly, nowhere did he indicate that the human intellect, after becoming an image or trace of the One, would become a god or that one's being would dissolve indefinitely into divine Being. Thus Plotinus' writings left many eschatological questions open.⁵⁴

Of further interest is Augustine's vision of the end of time, which has already been mentioned many times here because it was a determining factor in his account of the ascent to God. It encompassed as well implicit critique of Plotinus' depiction of intellectual vision. It had to do with the complete divine vision which could take place at no other time but at the resurrection in the afterlife.⁵⁵ His statements on the afterlife and resurrection were inspired by passages from Paul. Original sin also provided Augustine with a justification for the impossibility of a whole divine vision in this lifetime. One of Kenny's remarks on the differences between Augustine and Plotinus should be brought to attention here, concerning the greater impact of the fall of the soul in Augustine's thought compared to that of Plotinus:

... that Fall could not be subsumed in the eternal pattern of procession and return that made up the metaphysical seasons of reality in Plotinus. No, The Fall was for Augustine singular and temporal and wholly disastrous. And it was irremediable on its own terms. Thus knowledge of God was not within the soul's grasp, for the resources of its own ethical renewal were never within its own control.⁵⁶

Kenny's representation of Augustine's attitude concerning the fall of mankind and original sin as *wholly disastrous* and *irremediable* is contradictory and misleading. Both Augustine's and Plotinus' depictions of the fall of mankind served

54 Augustine brought up the question of reincarnation but he did not explicitly condone it. For example, in *Civ. Dei* x.30, Augustine evaluated the Platonist notion of reincarnation, commending Porphyry for not positing what to him was a ridiculous idea—that a human, no matter how evil, could reincarnate into the body of an animal. His interest in reincarnation seemed to be cut short on the basis that he could not locate any scriptural passages to substantiate it.

55 Treated in Chapter 4.3.2.7; *Gen. litt.* XII.28.56. Also treated in Chapter 5.4.7; throughout *Trin.*, e.g., XIV.18.24.

56 Kenny, 'Faith Reason', 288.

as an explanation for the sometimes tragic reality in which we live, which is in line with the tradition of ancient etiological myths. The story of Adam and Eve in Genesis itself falls as well within this tradition. Augustine used this story in Genesis to articulate his own doctrine of sin and used it to underpin his view as to why the will was not able to remain in intellectual vision for more than a few instances. In Augustine's mind, the fall was not *wholly disastrous*; it was indeed remediable in the long run. As this study has consistently indicated, Augustine did not depict the ascent to God as a 'failure'. Rather he posited it as a foreseeable trajectory of long-term personal (and collective) evolution and spiritual renewal. Moreover, he claimed that not only Adam's sin, which effectuated the deformity of the image of God, but all sins of humanity, as having been foreseen by God. Hence, the fall of the two primeval humans was in Augustine's consideration something known to God before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:14) and essentially not contrary to God's absolute will.⁵⁷ He also affirmed that it was likewise God's will for humans to be saved by the grace of God (*Gen. litt.* IX.18.33).

There was certainly nothing said about resurrection in Plotinus' philosophy. Yet the resurrection was for Augustine of prime importance, as it was the event when human images arrive at the final destiny: when they would receive their complete formation from Christ and become perfect images of God. It also served to demonstrate the important link between humans and Christ. In imitation of Christ's exemplary earthly life, the faithful could anticipate returning to the Father after the death of their physical bodies. At the end of time, they would imitate Christ's resurrection. In conclusion, we can assert that the main difference here between the two thinkers has to do with Augustine anchoring his eschatology in divine Scripture.

6.6 *Collective Vision and Redemption*

Augustine and Plotinus both linked redemption to gathering knowledge and progressive understanding: becoming conscious of oneself while becoming conscious of the divine. Directing one's love and desires to God, overcoming the difficulties of the will to do so, was the only way to achieve this goal. For both thinkers, redemption was carried out on an individual basis: the individual turned to the inner self, contemplated and experienced illumination, vision and formation. Plotinus tended to depict an individual's ascent to the One as an

57 *Gen. litt.* X.15.24; XI.4.6, 6.8; VI.17.28–28.39.

alone endeavor, possessed by a god.⁵⁸ Brachtendorf remarks: ‘Schliesslich wird Augustin ebenso wie Plotin auf der Autarkie des Selbstbezugs bestehen.’⁵⁹ This statement, that both thinkers insisted on the importance of attaining autarky, is only partially true because Augustine broke out of exclusive individualization by urging collective redemption. Rist’s sharp observations augment this conclusion.

True union with God is not, as Augustine seems still to have thought when hoping for a platonizing “ecstasy” in Milan, a matter of the alone to the alone, a one-on-One-experience. A very different kind of “mystical union” will be seen as a high point in the cultivation of love if “the whole Christian life is a holy desire” (*On John’s Epistle* 4.6) is properly understood. Augustine in effect repudiated his Milanese fumbblings in his account of the later “ecstasy” at Ostia, where not only did he experience a vision in company with another person, his mother Monica, but its background was the communion of saints, of those, that is, made beautiful—and hence holy by God’s grace.⁶⁰

Rist’s point here is that Augustine, as opposed to Plotinus, described his experience of intellectual vision in Ostia with another person and most interestingly, with someone who was unschooled, his mother Monica. Augustine also wrote that the soul of a Christian pertains to the community of saints. Whether those saints are persons or angels involved in the vision of God and in prayer, in the spirit, one is not alone.⁶¹ Redemption in the afterlife occurred according to Augustine as well on a collective basis (*Trin.* III.4.9).

Kenny places Augustine’s idea of collective redemption in the context of the philosophic schools in antiquity where the intellect was collectively trained.⁶² This is interesting because Plotinus had his own school in Rome. He argues that Augustine replaced the traditional philosophic school with the activities of the church.

Augustine’s new path to contemplative knowledge was to be pursued NOT through the traditional philosophical life but rather through the study

58 E.g., *Enn.* I.6.7.10. An exceptional passage is *Enn.* v.8.10.1–22, in which Plotinus describes a communal experience of the Ideas with the gods.

59 *Struktur*, 54.

60 Rist, *Augustine Deformed*, 77–78.

61 Augustine’s depiction of the communion of angels and saints: e.g., *Trin.* IV.11.14; Kenny, ‘Faith and Reason’, 288.

62 Kenny, ‘Faith and Reason’, 275–291, 288–290.

of divine revelation. ... For Augustine, inner intellection is, paradoxically, denominated in social as well as individual terms. To contemplate God through Scripture is to join with the Church, “the living soul of the faithful” (*Conf.* XIII.21.31) in its collective knowledge of God. As such the search of wisdom is reconceived by Augustine. And is now denominated in social terms. When faith seeks understanding, it does so by turning away from a solely individual quest for knowledge to one that is also socially grounded—in Scripture and in the Church. The Church is not just the institutional arbiter of Scripture; it constitutes the collective life of souls who jointly know God.

Conf. XIII.34.49

Kenny’s summary stresses the social and collective context of redemption which Augustine depicts. Although Kenny’s refers to *Conf.*, Augustine also refers occasionally to collective love and salvation in an ecclesiastical context in *Trin.* as well. For example:

... though he (LZ: Christ) is the Church’s Head and the Church is his body ... he wants his disciples to be one in him, because they cannot be one in themselves, split as they are from each other by clashing wills and desires and the uncleanness of their sins; so they are cleansed by the Mediator that they may be one in him, not only by virtue of the same nature, whereby all of them from the ranks of mortal men are made equal to the angels, but even more by virtue of one and the same harmonious will reaching out in concert to the same ultimate happiness and fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity.

Trin. IV.9

We could add to Kenny’s and Rist’s remarks the inclusion of Augustine’s instigation of monastic life⁶³ for the sake of collective contemplation and redemption (which he did not speak of in *Trin.*). These aspects constitute as well a major difference with Plotinus’ accounts of the ascent to God, as there was seldom evidence of collective spiritual experiences in the *Enneads*.

63 Augustine’s treatises on the monastic community: *Praeceptum*, *De Sancta Virginate*, *De opere monachorum*. See e.g., T.J. van Bavel, *Ooit een land van kloosters* (Leuven-Heverlee, 1991).

7 Synthesis

The common points between Augustine's and Plotinus' accounts of the ascent, listed in point 4. 'General Similarities', were extensive. Because that section was written as concisely as possible, these points do not need to be reiterated here. As stated in the introduction, discovering similarities between the thinking of Augustine and Plotinus does not pose a challenge. The difficulty is accurately putting the finger on where the major differences lie. For that reason, for the synthesis of this chapter, only an inventory is needed of the main major points of differences (from sections 5. and 6.). These require in themselves more elaboration and thus in Chapter 10 all the major conclusions of Chapters 6–9 (especially the pinpointed differences) will be reviewed together.

In Augustine's conception of intellectual vision, the soul experienced in this life various degrees of contemplation of the divine. It contrasted with Plotinus' in that intellectual vision was dependent upon Christ, the Word of God himself. This latter point (involving Augustine's doctrine of grace) was not in itself deemed a major difference between the two thinkers. However the active role which Christ played in Augustine's conception of the ascent by contemplation did indeed. Thanks to the divine Word's Incarnation, humans could personally relate to his life, death and resurrection. The conclusion here was that compared to Plotinus' depictions of the ascent, Augustine added not only a personal, human element, but also an external element (the Incarnation) to assist the individual's return to God.

A major difference between the two thinkers regarding the ascent was Augustine's unwillingness to depict the possibility of an ascent of total unification with the Trinity by the human soul in this life. In this sense, the soul was unable to unify with the three divine Persons and become a perfect image of the Holy Trinity. He found it necessary to pose distinct restrictions between the human image and the Holy Trinity, due to the general assumption that the Being of the Holy Trinity in itself was far too superior in magnitude for the human mind to fathom. Augustine did claim that we can contemplate the Trinity, and that participation was to some extent possible yet this never entailed a *total* participation. Nor did Augustine interpret contemplation as a complete participation in a divine self-relationship, which would ultimately entail a transcendence (albeit momentary) of the self, in the way Plotinus sometimes suggested.

In Augustine's doctrine, there was neither a complete union of the intellect with the intelligible world in the *Verbum*. As such, he never spoke of a full glimpse of the entire intelligible world, as Plotinus sometimes did. Likewise, for Augustine there was no direct connection from the human intellect to the divine level of existence to the extent that the intellect was always immedi-

ate and fully immersed in the divine, as often expressed in Plotinus' doctrine of the intellect. He refuted the Platonist claim that divine knowledge could be obtained solely by the contemplation of the Ideas; for the Ideas did not relay God's plan for the world, the history of mankind from its inceptions to its finality (*Trin.* IV.16.21). This knowledge was provided by Christ's revelation in Scripture, which also informed of the soul-intellect's personal development. He evaluated Plotinian contemplation in the following way: although Plotinus' view on intellection contained an enormous amount of truth, it failed to provide the complete picture which would effectuate the goals expressed in the *Enneads* themselves. These were: the attainment of liberation from this world, becoming godlike and earning the merit of dwelling in heaven in the afterlife.

In contrast to Plotinus, Augustine envisioned a collective redemption in a number of ways, in particular in an ecclesiastical context: collectively desiring wisdom, experiencing union with God through intellectual vision, spiritual exercises and prayer, and at the final beatific vision at the resurrection. In contrast to Plotinus' eschatology, which involved becoming godlike after a number of successive reincarnations, Augustine's specified that the ultimate resemblance to God would only occur at the experience of the vision in the afterlife. For the majority of mankind such a feat was impossible in this life, he stressed, as we now can only see God through faith, through the dark mirror and the enigmas of material images within ourselves; or in short glimpses through Christ's illumination.

Plotinus in Augustine's Doctrine of the Image of God

1 Introduction

In Chapters 6–9, the most significant concepts in Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* were compared to corresponding ones in Plotinus. These analyses rendered some interesting observations which will be now reviewed in order to provide a response to the initial inquiry of this study: to identify which Plotinian concepts Augustine utilized in order to reinforce his doctrine of the image of God and the way in which he integrated them into his biblical reflection. This chapter essentially discusses and articulates the Plotinian influence in Augustine's doctrine. To do this, it will be helpful to begin by reviewing the most significant conclusions from the comparisons between Augustine's and Plotinus' conceptions (the correspondences and differences) from Chapters 6–9 on the triune Godhead, the intellect-image, love-image and the ascent.

In sections 2–3 of this chapter, the major conclusions from the preceding chapters will be reviewed as succinctly as possible—chapter by chapter—as a kind of inventory of the elements in Augustine's doctrines in which the influence of Plotinus' doctrines was the strongest. As noted often in these chapters, we had no trouble finding similarities between the doctrines of Augustine and Plotinus, there were too many to treat and we basically pared out those which were the least questionable. It was mentioned frequently as well, that the challenge in carrying out this study was not so much indicating the correspondences but to pinpoint the major differences. By taking a step back and looking at the major differences from Chapters 6–9 as a whole, we can arrive at a clearer picture of how Augustine developed his Christian theology and determine the reasons he consciously deviated from Plotinus' philosophy more accurately than is generally presented in scholarly Augustinian literature.

Section three will discuss as well Augustine's motivation for providing a more complete picture of the image of God in *Trin.*, based upon his reading of the *Enneads*. Reviewing the results of Chapters 6–9 will also recall many of Augustine's points of critique of Platonism from *Conf.*, *Civ. Dei*, and *Trin.*, which were the main interest of Chapter 2. The fourth section will evaluate these points, which in turn will supply us with many new insights into Augustine's appraisal of Plotinian Platonism and how he made use of Plotinus' philosophy.

2 The Plotinian Influence on Augustine: Marked Similarities

In Augustine's doctrines of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*, there were three major domains of influence from the *Enneads*: Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect, Love, and the ascent, which will be reviewed and reflected upon here in that order.

2.1 *Plotinus' Doctrine of the Hypostasis Intellect and the Human Intellect*

Augustine often applied characteristics of the divine Intellect to his own conception of the human intellect as the *imago Dei* and especially in *Trin.* as the *imago Trinitatis*. Plotinus' depiction of the imaging relationship of the human νοῦς and divine Νοῦς, as well as his general conception of imaging, were major underlying elements throughout Augustine's conception of the image of God as intellect, as we saw in Chapter 7.1.

Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect could be detected in Augustine's characterization of the *Verbum Dei* in a number of different ways. In fact, the correspondences were so numerous that it would actually be more helpful to refer back to Chapter 6.4 instead of attempting to summarize them here. An aspect which was highlighted in Chapter 6 concerned the mediation of the second Person/Hypostasis by means of rational creation principles—Ideas, existing in that entity himself. For Plotinus, this entailed the Λόγοι, for Augustine, the *Rationes*. Besides the characteristics of the notion of Νοῦς, it was evident that Plotinus' notion of the Λόγος was of great interest to Augustine as well (Chapter 6.2.3). We reflected in that chapter on the depiction of the relationship of the second divine Person to the first. This aspect, also present in the New Testament, fit the description of Plotinus' Hypostases as well, which surfaced repeatedly in Augustine's doctrine. Augustine also adapted the Νοῦς' self-referential unity to his conception of the Holy Trinity (Chapter 6.2.5).

Plotinus' notion of Intellect was also a prevalent factor in Augustine's depiction of the angelic realm of the *caelum caeli*, as the origin of the human soul in *Gen. litt.* I–III. Aspects of Plotinus' depiction of how the Intellect came into existence from the One were particularly marked here. They included such terminology as ἐπιστροφή (in Augustine's *conversio*), receiving one's formation while engaged in the contemplation of the Ideas.¹ The angels' perfect intellectual vision resembled many of Plotinus' depictions of the human νοῦς, meditating upon the intelligible world.

¹ *Gen. litt.* III.20.30–31; See Chapter 4.3.2.

More aspects of Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect appeared as major elements in Augustine's epistemology regarding the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* (Chapter 7.2). They can be summed up as follows: the activity of contemplation in general; intellectual vision, in particular, the characteristics of intellectual vision as an intuitive, immediate, non-representative comprehension of divine truth; the identification of the intellect with its intelligibles which Augustine applied to his theory of intellectual vision in *Gen. litt.* XII and also to his conception of self-knowledge in *Trin.* IX–X. Further, there was the division of the rational soul into two regions—the *ratio inferior* and *superior* and its corresponding two types of knowledge: *scientia*, *sapientia* (*Trin.* XII–XIII), all of which bore the same characteristics of Plotinus' differentiation of λόγος/νοῦς and διανοητικόν/νόησις. Plotinus' triad of knowledge νοῦς-νόησις-νοητόν was applied to Augustine's second divine Person as well as to the human intellect.

Augustine was also deeply inspired by Plotinus' account of the imaging process taking place in the human mind: such as self-knowledge or *verbum intimum* being an image or product of the *mens* (*Trin.* VIII–X). This was parallel to Plotinus' representation of the imaging carried out by the soul-λόγος of the intellect and its intellection (*Enn.* v.3.8.10, etc.). Augustine's notion of the *verbum intimum* was composed by intermeshing various Plotinian conceptions such as imaging, the human intellect and the soul-λόγος—in its mode of discursive thinking and self-knowledge.

These aspects confirm that Augustine regarded the greater part of Plotinus' doctrine of intellect as truth. Like Plotinus, he firmly believed that one could actualize the intellect (in spite of the hardships involved) and obtain truth of this existence, beginning with contemplating God through his Ideas. Through this actualization, one could gradually return to God and become godlike. In short, Augustine's notion of the image of God as intellect as well as his epistemology, were undeniably strongly Plotinian in nature. Even Plotinus' depiction of the human intellect as being divine, which he opposed, must also be included here although it was this notion which provided the motivation for a major correction (discussed in section 4).

Plotinus' depiction of how the Intellect was conceived by the One was a favorite motif of Augustine's, prevalent for example in his notion of the Godhead: the accent on the *Verbum's* eternal contemplation of the Father or his role in bringing souls to contemplation of God (Chapter 6.4); as already mentioned above, the angelic realm and the human intellect, as well as in Augustine's notion of love.

Augustinian scholarship recognizes *Enn.* v.1, v.3 and v.5 as Augustine's epistemological sources. There were of course many more possibilities, as many of these themes were repeated elsewhere in other treatises in other contexts

which would have been equally interesting for Augustine; for instance, in the fourth *Ennead* chapters 3–5: *On Difficulties About the Soul* (I, II and III) and IV.6: *On Sense-Perception and Memory*.

2.2 *Plotinus' Doctrine of Love*

As described in Chapter 8, the Plotinian influence in Augustine had to do with divine love and the manifestation of this love in the human soul. Plotinus' account of human love for others, by contrast, provided Augustine with a motivation for correction. Plotinus' first principle, the One—as origin of all love, was likewise influential in Augustine's conception of a transcendent Trinitarian Godhead of Love. The element love formed the main axis of Augustine's and Plotinus' anthropologies and psychologies.

In the comparisons on love in 8.3, we saw how Augustine employed a great deal of Plotinus' conception of Ἔρως in his doctrine of *imago Trinitatis*, as an upward driving force which progressively moved through the regions of the soul in order to unite it with its ultimate true beloved—the Godhead. For both thinkers, this Godhead was the source of all love and knowledge. The force of love was awakened in the human soul by beauty, first through sense perception and subsequently becoming actualized in the intellect, where it expanded and carried one further than oneself, ultimately to God. Love became actualized in the intellect which was always oriented to God. As such, love was the driving force or stimulant in acquiring knowledge as well as divine wisdom. Proper love was explored in terms of both rationality (in self-consciousness) and supra-rationality (beyond oneself as sole object). Additionally, for both thinkers, love and desire operated together to carry the soul into the realm of divine incomprehensibility.

The letters of Paul and especially John's Epistle provided the basis for Augustine's treatment on love in *Trin.* VIII–X, where we find his most seminal exposition. We saw correspondences there not only with Plotinus' characterization of the Ἔρως, but also with his conception of the 'desiring Intellect', who as image of the One, longed to know his source. This aspect was also an example of how the elements of knowledge and love were interwoven in Plotinus' thought. In Augustine's triads involving love in *Trin.* VIII, we saw variations of Plotinus' triad of love which manifested in the One. Especially striking here was the association of absolute Love and Good, which for both thinkers represented the loftiest goal. Concerning this theme, close textual similarities were pinpointed. Included in the correspondences was Plotinus' terminology of *substantia*,² which Augustine applied to the element love. Plotinus' general metaphysical

2 I.e., *Enn.* V.1, V.3, VI.8.15.1–5.

framework was also evident here: the distinction between the physical and immaterial divine worlds which represented the general directions to which love could be directed. The elements of knowledge and love were in the thought of both fused together; however in Augustine's exploration of the human mind in *Trin.* VIII–X, these two were more closely knit together than in the *Enneads*.

It is difficult to exactly ascertain which Plotinian treatises Augustine utilized. For this study, the following treatises were consulted: *Enn.* III.5; *On Love*; V.8: *On the Intelligible Beauty* and especially VI.7 *How the Multitude of the Forms Came Into Being: and on the Good*.

2.3 *On the Ascent*

On this subject, the similarities were as rampant as those pertaining to the intellect and likewise, it would be more useful to refer back to Chapter 9.4, where these correspondences are summarized and discussed. Basically the most significant ones will be reviewed here. The most obvious point of congruence was the inward turn and the rise of consciousness from physical sense perception through the soul upwards to the immaterial. By contemplating the eternal Ideas, which existed in the second divine Person/Hypostasis, divine illumination was assimilated. Two elements from both thinkers were concentrated upon in this study, namely knowledge and love, through which one attained unity with the Godhead in different ways. The cornerstone of both accounts was the distancing oneself from the material exterior world in order to attain the divine light and true wisdom. (However, we must be careful not to make hasty conclusions about Augustine on this, because as we will see in the review of the differences, he was also acutely aware of the limitations of this perspective.) The ascent to the Godhead by contemplation and love was for both the principle *raison d'être* for human life. Everything revolved around it—the acquisition of one's knowledge, one's longings and loves; generally, the whole cosmos was created for pointing the way back to the Creator. Yet this observation was however scarcely evident without meditation and reflection. Both Augustine and Plotinus described their own experiences in detail, intended as mystagogy for their followers.

Ascending to God was the means to finding fulfilment; one experienced divine union usually piecemeal or in flashes of intellectual vision. These incidents could progressively intensify with personal development and the purification of the soul. The search for the transcendent God within oneself and for knowledge and love of God compensated for the inherent weaknesses of the soul and largely contributed to attaining enduring happiness in this life. The ambition was a union with the God or Godhead in the most intensive manner possible.

Plotinus' treatments of the ascent were spread throughout the *Enneads*. Augustinian scholarship is in agreement that with great likelihood, Augustine read 1.6.: *On Beauty* and 5.1: *On the Three Primary Hypostases*. Both were popular treatises in antiquity and included intriguing accounts of the ascent. Yet Augustine could have read and reflected upon other treatises as well, such as 11.7: *How the Multitude of the Forms Came Into Being: and on the Good*, which often came into the picture in the treatment on love in Chapter 8. Augustine's borrowing of aspects from the Plotinian ascent would not necessarily be limited to these works.

2.4 *Augustine's More Complete Exposition on Imaging in De Trinitate*

In the framework of Augustine's Plotinian influence, there is another significant point which merits mention. In Augustine's exposition of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* in *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.*,³ we saw that Augustine attempted to solve a number of problems. These had to do with questions such as: what is 'knowledge of God' by which the human image becomes similar to God? Can the human image of God become divine if God is immaterial and transcendent? To what extent is a union of the human image with that which it images, possible in this life? These were likewise the main issues in the *Enneads*. By examining Augustine's attempts to answer these questions, particularly those which concerned imaging, we were able to uncover some of Augustine's underlying goals in his Trinitarian agenda which will be briefly recapitulated here.

In *Gen. litt.*, he established a strong relation between the human image of God and the second Trinitarian Person, 'through whom all things were made'. The Word of God, he posited, was the perfect Image of God. He also created man to his image. It was therefore God the Son, the Creator, or Christ, who formed and reformed the human soul, whom humans imitated or attempted to image in order to become godlike.⁴

If Augustine had considered Plotinus' well systemized cosmology and his process of imaging⁵ in light of his exegesis of the image of God as delineated in *Gen. litt.*, he would have evidently concluded that something was missing. He neglected to specify *how* the *imago Dei*-intellect could image the *Verbum Dei* or the Holy Trinity in the extensive manner which Plotinus did with the *Noûs* and the Godhead in the *Enneads*. We recall that Plotinus described the rational soul in particular, the *λόγος* and *νοûς*, imitating the divine Soul, the third Hypostasis, and particularly her two highest regions: the World

³ See Chapters 4.3 and 5.3.

⁴ Chapter 4, sections 2 and 3.

⁵ Even though his doctrines in the *Enneads* were not presented in a systematic manner.

Soul-Λόγος and the Soul-Νοῦς.⁶ The latter participated strongly in the second Hypostasis, the Intellect and its intelligible world. The human soul would mirror the All-Soul in her ascent within herself, actualizing her Intellect. In uniting with the Νοῦς, the human soul would subsequently activate the imaging of the Intellect. To ascend further to the ultimate causal source, the One or the Good, the inseparable relationship of the second Hypostasis to the first was indispensable: in order to rise to the One, the soul must first fully actualize the consciousness of the second Hypostasis and ultimately surpass it (Chapter 6.2.1).

The point here is that Plotinus demonstrated the imaging process of the human soul in a more thorough manner—throughout the entire triune Godhead. Augustine, however, in his *Gen. litt.*, only explored the imaging of the second Trinitarian Person, the eternal Son-Word by the human soul and predominantly in his eternal countenance. The Son's perfect imaging of the Father was only mentioned a few times in passing. It must have occurred to Augustine that there were many more possibilities to explore in the exegesis of Gen. 1:26–27.

Hence Augustine's exposition on the image of God in *Trin.* appeared to be fueled by his ambition to compensate for what he was unable to explain in the context of his creation doctrine: how the human soul reflected the divine Trinity. To do so, he amply made use of Plotinus' doctrine of intellect and its various aspects regarding imaging the divine model; such as in his epistemology, the language of ontology and substance, the two aspects of knowledge and love, etc. Augustine tackled the problem of the human imaging of the Holy Trinity by exploring the human mind more diligently than in his previous works (such as *Conf. x* or *Civ. Dei* XI.26–28) in attempt to express more acutely and as tangibly as possible how the intellect could be an image of the Holy Trinity. This is most evident in his in-depth analysis of the triads in the human mind in *Trin.* VIII–X. This particular observation has not been recognized in scholarly literature.

Likewise of interest to note here, is the fact that many scholars attributed Augustine's source for the intramental triads to Marius Victorinus or Cicero.⁷ Yet this study highlighted Plotinus' usage of triads in the divine Intellect and One, which could have also inspired Augustine's exploration of the trinitarian human mind. While doing so, Augustine took the opportunity to make the corrections of the deficiencies he found in the oeuvre of his Platonist mentor, such as those concerning the divinity of the soul, human love and the ascent.

6 From Chapter 3.2.

7 See Chapter 7.3.2.

3 Major Differences

3.1 *Review of the Differences (Chapter-by-Chapter)*

In the comparisons on the Godhead (Chapter 6), the most salient differences boiled down to two general aspects: i) Augustine's personal factor in the Godhead which had to do with the human Incarnation of the second Person and his direct and personal relationship with humans, and ii.) Augustine's more stringent differentiation between the Creator and the creature. In the comparison of the image-intellect and epistemologies (Chapter 7), the same aspects were indicated as divergences. Yet there were other differences as well, which mainly had to do with Augustine's stronger emphasis on faith, prayer, Scriptures and revelation. It was noted there that although these elements were characteristically Christian, these were not considered issues of great weight, due to the fact that parallels in the *Enneads* could be found. However, seen in other contexts, these aspects would in fact come to the foreground as contrasting factors.

The differences in their doctrines of love established in Chapter 8 were, in a nutshell, the following: Augustine rightly emphasized that love for God was simply impossible without the element faith. Furthermore, the source for the rules of faith were the Old and New Testament, an obvious difference with Plotinus. Additionally, Augustine frequently underlined that exercising faith, hope and love (an expression of Paul) would bring well-being and happiness not only in this life, but also prepare us for the reality in the afterlife in the Heavenly Jerusalem.

Another significant point was the eternal Form, Justice, which Augustine equivocated with divine Love. He posited that an understanding of divine Justice was not only essential to one's understanding of God but also to one's charity towards others. The Idea Justice was evident in Plotinus' and Plato's philosophies as connected to the Idea Good. Its contemplation was necessary for becoming just and honest. Acquiring virtuous behavior was indeed of utmost importance in Plotinus' thought, yet the connection of Justice to Love was not direct or explicit there. Augustine perceived that in order for people to harmonize with one another and create peaceful relations, the eternal Idea Justice must play a much more prominent and indeed a more conscious role in human relations. Love for another was based upon loving Justice: one loved others for their goodness, honesty and trustworthiness, for their sense of Justice as a godlike characteristic (*Trin.* VIII). Thus we see here Augustine's expansion of Plotinus' ἔργος to human love. Additionally, according to Augustine, Christ represented Love and divine Justice. The latter included Christ's role at the Last Judgment.

This point on Justice is particularly meaningful, because it relates to another important divergence from Plotinus: the emphasis on human love. Augustine placed human love on a pedestal. He posited that love for others was inseparable from love of God. Augustine was surely convinced of the insufficient articulation of loving one's neighbor in the *Enneads*. Plotinus tended to depict human love more as a metaphor or a phase in the pursuit of true love, intended to be surpassed in preference for one's enjoyment of the bliss of the One, alone. The church father discovered plenty of scriptural passages which expressed this more concisely and in the immediate context of divine knowledge as well, such as Ep. John and in Paul's letters. Moreover, Augustine posited that in order to be able to steer one's love and desires to loving God and avoiding sin—which for Plotinus were likewise important goals—one's dependence on the personal relationship with Christ must be recognized. Additionally he believed that Christ's life was a guide to selfless and expansive love. The eternal Son of God, the once incarnate Christ, was a personal support and intermediary which all Platonists missed in their contemplative practice. Augustine advocated as well that loving God and other humans was essential for attaining a resemblance to God and the Trinity; it was also essential to the fulfillment of the soul's innate desire to unite with God. He was also convinced that the other way around was true as well: that the whole Trinity loved and cared for its creation. The latter was only mentioned once in the *Enneads*.⁸

We note here again that in Augustine's notions of intellect and love, the differences with Plotinus were mostly but not always Christian in character and as such, based upon the Scriptures. The best example of this was 'Love your neighbor'. Can we differentiate in Augustine's thinking the biblical influence from the philosophical ... or better said, the Plotinian? We shall return to this subject in the next chapter on Augustine's Christian Platonism in Chapter 11.

Lastly, in contrast to Plotinus, love and desire for God were for Augustine channeled and enhanced by prayer. By his vocation to prayer, Augustine stimulated an unrelenting search for God's love and knowledge, which would transform the direction of desire from self-gratification to praise and thanks to God and to an eagerness to conform to his will.

The main points of difference on the ascent in Chapter 9 were directly related to Augustine's critique of Platonism, as dealt with in Chapter 2, especially in *Conf.* They boiled down to the same two major aspects which were established in Chapter 6.3 on the Godhead, mentioned above: i) the personal factor in the Godhead, the Incarnation of the second Person and his direct and

⁸ Augustine: *Trin.* 1.10.20; Plotinus: *Enn.* VI.7.22.20.

personal relationship with humans, and ii.) Augustine's constant reminder of the ontological difference between the Creator and the creature. It is of great interest to review the manner in which Augustine articulated these two points in *Trin.*, in order to display the nuances in Augustine's thinking.

He showed that the intellect oriented to God would image the Trinity in the best way when it was engaged in the activities of remembering, understanding and loving God. In a general way, this echoed Plotinus' structure of the human soul imaging the entire triune Godhead in its hierarchic regions.⁹ Because the three divine Persons in Augustine's conception of the Godhead were equal, the three elements of the intramental triads were ideally equal as well. However, the crux of the matter here is that Augustine delineated important limitations in this analogy, namely, that the human soul, even in its highest consciousness, could never attain the perfect imaging of or unity with the Holy Trinity. Augustine's Trinitarian and image of God theology disclosed his conviction that the ascent to the Godhead did not and could not happen in the same way as in Plotinus' descriptions. This was not only because for Augustine the three divine Persons were equal and for Plotinus, the three Hypostases were hierarchical.¹⁰

Augustine found Plotinus' version of the intellect merging with the divine too spontaneous, automatic and self-evident, while, ironically, Plotinus also depicted the struggles of the soul to know and love the divine. The contemplation of the Ideas by the human intellect was often illustrated by Plotinus as a full view of the intelligible world accompanied by a total possession by the *Noûs*. Augustine made it his project to investigate these matters in *Trin.* much more thoroughly than he did in *Gen. litt.* Where were the limits between the human and divine *intelligentia*? How far could the union with God go?

Plotinus had a profound knowledge of the human mind and of the problems of the soul in her desire to return to the Godhead. Yet in Augustine's view, Plotinus insufficiently took account of the factor of normal fallibility in uniting with God. Augustine strongly accentuated the inherent brokenness of mankind by original sin and elaborately stipulated the psychological factors involved in this which hindered one's ascent to God. Because Plotinus' philosophy generally lacked this perspective, his depiction of intellectual visions, in Augustine's view, could easily result in arrogance and self-deceit—which was the opposite of what the great Neo-Platonist intended. Augustine apparently thought, this must be made clear once and for all: if humans were to become godlike, then it is only God (Christ) who can do this—by His will, which would purify and

9 See the preceding section as well as Chapter 9.6.4.

10 As affirmed in Chapter 6.3.2.

heal souls in a gradual, progressive manner—even on a daily basis and ultimately lift them up to his divine abode. In order for the will to become healed and strengthened, a person must follow God's Son, who is accessible and intelligible. One must also voluntarily succumb to the will of God by minimalizing the urges to become superior or powerful and find contentment in humility. Because Augustine stressed more than Plotinus how needy the human soul was, he naturally posited God's assistance and intervention much further than Plotinus. The latter's claim of dependence in the relationship between the human and the divine had predominantly to do with the human intellect being lifted upwards by the divine force *Λόγος* to the *Νοῦς*, subsequently to the One by the force of attraction of *Ἔρως*, Beauty and Grace, which derived from the highest principle, the Good. For Augustine, divine assistance and intervention came from an immaterial God who had become human and attached himself to the welfare of individuals.

One final point to mention here which constitutes another major deviation from Plotinus was Augustine's appreciation for collective intellectual vision. The shared vision with Monica in Ostia in *Conf.* was an explicit illustration of Augustine's opinion that intellectual vision was not reserved strictly for 'intellectuals', but was also for humble folk, such as his mother, as well.¹¹

3.2 *Synthesis of Differences*

Considering all the differences in the inventory, it is now of interest to pinpoint the most significant ones and discuss those which were common to many or all of the three themes which were investigated. The most obvious and primary difference illustrated throughout these sections was Augustine's Christological orientation. Augustine posited the total dependence of the human image on the second Trinitarian Person, God's eternal Word who was born into this world, who created the possibility of an intense, personal and mutual relationship between the divine and humans. Christ was involved here as Savior and also represented a central element in Augustine's epistemology, as a source of divine knowledge, revealing the deeper truth of mankind and the world. Augustine's Christology was thus ingrained with another significant difference—the personal human element in the Godhead, an aspect which resonated throughout all the facets studied here. Personal assistance and direct intermediation by the second Trinitarian Person, factors of utmost importance to Augustine, were non-existent in Plotinus' conception of the Intellect.

¹¹ *Conf.* IX.10.23; Chapter 9.6.6.

The emphasis on these two aspects, Christology and the personal human element, created the necessity for Augustine to justify and underscore the sanctity of the Old and New Testament, which not only relayed the story of Christ and his resurrection, but provided articles of faith which were of crucial importance for coming to a more profound understanding of God. Knowledge of God relayed through the Scriptures, was an external form of knowledge, *scientia*, which stimulated faith (also designated as *scientia*) and was necessary to bring one to understanding the wisdom *sapientia*, of the divine *Verbum*. It was this divine Person, as Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, who lifted human insight from worldly knowledge to divine wisdom.

The human Incarnation, Scriptures and faith represented external features which were intended to be interiorized, as aids to the ascent. External features of any kind used to reach this goal were non-existent in the *Enneads*. This point relates back to Augustine's critique of the Platonists boasting of their contemplation of the Ideas in *Trin.* IV.16.21. In his view, contemplating the Ideas alone did not supply knowledge of world history and particularly the history of how the human image had originally become deformed. Thus studying Scripture was required for a complete understanding of how the mind reflected the divine, as these books provided more realistic clues than the *Enneads* as to how and when an ascent to God could be accomplished.

Pertaining to these external features as well was the aspect of human love. Augustine elevated loving others as oneself and charitable behavior to the status of highest priority. He fused human love with God's love, as if they were inseparable, thereby accentuating the personal human element in both instances even further. Augustine exhorted loving others in the way which Christ loved all persons.

The elements faith and prayer were discussed in the contexts of both love and the epistemology. Although faith and prayer were not alien to Plotinus' epistemology, they were not promoted as a means to elevate oneself to the divine as in Augustine's case. Augustine underscored that faith would eventually lead to understanding of desired ultimate truths. Prayer was an instrument of expression of loving and longing for God; desiring and loving God enhanced in effect one's faith. On the other hand, Plotinus' prayers in the *Enneads* were not directly associated with loving and desiring.

Returning to the personal human element, Augustine was more intensely preoccupied with human psychology than Plotinus. Although he obviously took Plotinus' ideas on the origin of evil, *unde malum*, seriously, his own teachings on human nature, original sin, the pitfalls of human love and the will, were supported by Scripture. The best example of this was his interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve. Another example was his advocating the necessity of

humility in order to ascend to God, which was derived from the study of Jesus' life in the New Testament. To improve the natural egotistic tendencies inherent in the human soul, he recommended meditating on the humble self-sacrifice of the *Verbum Dei*, which provided humans with a perfect model—a perfect Image of God—to imitate. In this way, they could progress to become godlike or 'Christ-like'.

Plotinus' goals were essentially the same as Augustine's: to gradually approach God by strengthening one's likeness to Him. In order to do so, a purification of the heart was necessary. Plotinus and Augustine prescribed this purification in many of the same ways: such as contemplating the Ideas, instilling goodness and virtue in the soul and training the mind's eye to perceive beyond the physical. But Augustine's stress on purification went a few steps further: one needed to scrupulously recognize one's sins, regret them and confess them to Christ in prayer in order to be purged of them. Augustine directly attributed the purification of sin to the *Verbum Dei* himself, as well as to his life on earth in which he sacrificed himself for the sins of the world. Cherishing these aspects in faith purified the soul as well.¹² As such, Augustine underscored the importance of self-awareness and self-critique to a greater extent than Plotinus. He connected these to an historical event which was intended to change the consciousness of the world, but which was not yet fully comprehended. When Scripture was properly understood, Christ's life was not just about the phenomenon of God passing through this world as a human,—which in Greek philosophy was implausible—but about God who out of pure love came to the world to aid the return of humans to God the Father, by carrying their burdens for them and transforming their defects which were essentially the causes of the hardships and sinfulness of this world. Christ's healing grace was more effective in the ascent to God than when attempting this solely by individual effort.

As such, in Augustine's view, Plotinus left too many aspects of becoming godlike, such as the 'how', 'when' and 'how far' questions, unanswered. As he expressed in *Conf.* VII.20.26, the Platonists knew where the Fatherland was, but they did not know how to arrive there. In Augustine's exploration of the ways in which the soul as Trinitarian image could unite with the Holy Trinity, he ultimately declared that such a potential enterprise entailed limitations (Chapter 9.6.4). He emphasized that a union with the Trinity, as in the three elements of the human mind in union with the three divine Persons (for instance, as analogous to Plotinus' depiction of the imaging of the three Hypostases) was

12 See Chapter 7.3.4.

not only unfeasible in this life, he even seemed to suggest that a complete union with the Godhead in this way was neither likely in the afterlife. In many ways, Augustine's attitude towards the possibility of human's union with the Holy Trinity resembled that of Plotinus' concerning the union of the One. Plotinus expressed his doubts clearer about the soul's union with the One, more than he did concerning the human intellect's union with the divine *Noûs*. The actualized intellect desired this, but this wish was not necessarily granted.

Hence, Augustine stressed—more than Plotinus—the dependence on God for this actualization. Intellectual vision in this life, as well as the blessed vision in the afterlife would predominantly take place only through the grace of second Trinitarian Person: the divine Son, Word, Creator, Christ. As such, union with 'God' essentially meant a union with Christ. In this 'correction' of Plotinus, Augustine ironically turned to another facet of Plotinus' theology: his positive view concerning a human's relationship with the second Hypostasis. This entity's strong relationship with first Person/Hypostasis enabled human souls to contemplate the One (Chapter 6.2.1). The difference in Augustine's view was that the *Verbum Dei's* Incarnation as Jesus Christ reinforced the personal relationship with the second Person to a stronger degree, which likewise had the effect of facilitating the union with the first Person, God the Father.

In light of Augustine's reproach of the Platonists in *Conf.* VII., that although they knew where God was, they did not know how to get there, it was therefore ironic, that Augustine agreed wholeheartedly with Plotinus that through acquiring divine knowledge and wisdom—through the epistemological ascent and through the shift of one's love and desires to God—one would indeed arrive! Another point of irony is that Augustine's characterization of the second Person in his divine eternal gestalt was greatly dominated by traits from Plotinus' notion of the divine Intellect (Chapter 6.2.2). Additionally, there were many common qualities in Augustine's and Plotinus' characterizations of the triune Godhead.¹³

Another major point of difference was the following: Augustine supplemented the Plotinian account of the ascent based upon knowledge and love with the possibility of contemplation and redemption on a collective basis. The shared vision with Monica in Ostia in *Conf.* IX.10.23 epitomized this. Collectivity and community played a much stronger role in Augustine's thought on the ascent and was directly connected to his emphasis on human love as well as his inclusion of certain kinds of exteriority. Augustine supplemented his theology with the personal development of the human intellect imaging Christ, not only

13 In that same Chapter (6) on the Godhead, section 2.

with the collective reading of Holy Scriptures, but also with worship and prayer in ecclesiastic and monastic communities. His accentuation of redemption realized together with other Christians enhanced the human personal element, which also permeated his thought. As a result, his doctrines, seen from a general stance, provided more personal support for the individual than was evident in the *Enneads*. All in all, Augustine argued the superiority of Christian worship to Plotinian philosophy, because of the awareness the New Testament afforded in advancing the human image's relationship to that what it imaged. Properly interpreted, these sacred texts revealed that human love may be fallible, but Christ's love for humans was not—as proved by his Incarnation.

I would like to conclude this section with several additional remarks. Plotinus and Augustine both formulated doctrines which advocated participation in the Godhead. Augustine emphasized limitations on participation where they seemed to be lacking in the *Enneads*. He analyzed Plotinus' accounts of the ascent and placed necessary nuances there which were absent or omitted in the treatises which he had read. In my opinion, Augustine's statements on the infeasibility of a complete union with the Godhead did not imply a negation of a *unio mystica*,¹⁴ or a pessimistic view of mankind's redemption—as if post-lapsarian humans inherently and consistently fail to return to their Creator because of the invincible effects of original sin. Instead his teachings, like those of Plotinus, still expressed an optimistic theology, facilitated by one's relationship with Christ. His interpretation of the New Testament removed any illusions of perfection or deification while in this life.¹⁵ Christ, in collaboration with the Holy Spirit, would bring the human soul to a unification with God—through the experience of love and desire, by means of contemplation and intellectual vision—to the degree and the extent that it was possible for the human individual to achieve this.

The latter clause is an expression used frequently by Plotinus.¹⁶ This end note illustrates, as it has been illustrated time and time again in this study, that pointing to stark differences between the thinking of the two remains a difficult endeavor. An insight by Burnyeat can assist us to understand why this is so. Augustine's reading of Plotinus taught him not to be a slavish disciple but to create a Platonism of his own, while retaining important Plotinian themes which he found could be harmonized with Scripture and the Catholic

14 As claimed by e.g., A. Schindler, *Wort und Analogie in Augustins Trinitätslehre* (Tübingen, 1965) 227.

15 *Trin.* XI.5.8; XII.11.16.

16 E.g., in *Enn.* V.3.8.57.

tradition.¹⁷ Indeed we have seen here that Augustine did not merely borrow passages from Plotinus, but thoroughly understood their context and implications in order to provide a convincing revision. He integrated them into his own thinking in order to produce, like Plotinus himself did, a new, original philosophical vision.

4 Augustine's Critique of Platonism: An Evaluation

Now that we have established the major differences between the two thinkers, let us now review the results of this study from another angle. We will apply these same differences to Augustine's critique of Platonism treated in Chapter 2. There, Augustine's appraisal of Platonism was treated in three of his works: *Confessions*, *The City of God* and *The Trinity*. In section 3 of that chapter, these statements were already subjected to a brief evaluation. It was concluded there that there was generally a sense of continuity between his remarks on Platonism in *Conf.* and those later in *Civ. Dei* and *Trin.*, with only a few discrepancies detected. For the most part, Augustine's assessment seemed fair and correct. Now we will re-examine these statements in light of the results in Chapters 6–9, which will produce important sights into Augustine's relationship to Plotinus' philosophy.

The first and foremost point of critique of the Platonists in *Conf.* which applied to Plotinus was that Plotinian cosmology may have been founded on the correct conception of an immaterial, divine 'Son of God', yet it had no notion of his Incarnation.¹⁸ As such, Platonists missed the profundity of Christ's message of humility. Thus, after reading Plotinus, Augustine claimed to still be unable to sufficiently explain his soul's interiority.¹⁹ Considering how much Augustine had later read of Platonism to supplement his knowledge of this philosophy,—as demonstrated in his lengthy expositions on Platonism in *Civ. Dei*—the reproach that Platonism did not bring him further into the depths of his soul could only have held true directly after Augustine's first reading of the Platonist books during his stay in Milan. Because as *Civ. Dei* showed, his knowledge of Platonist philosophy was profound. Yet his point in *Conf.* was that one required the story of Christ's Incarnation, the wisdom from his suffering and resurrection as relayed in Scripture, in order to understand oneself more deeply.

17 Burnyeat (1987) is quoted by Rist, yet no further bibliographic information is given ('Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', 414, 406).

18 Chapter 2.1.7–8.; *Conf.* VII.9.13–14.

19 *Conf.* VII.20.26–21.27.

We can substantiate Augustine's declaration above by considering the differences between Augustine's and Plotinus' conceptions of the Godhead derived from section three. There, the conclusion was that the Plotinian Godhead essentially missed a personal, human element, which was deemed a major difference in their doctrines. In Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine, the human, Jesus Christ, made up a part of the divine nature of the second Person in the triune Godhead. Augustine fully endorsed the need for a personal relationship between Christ and humans. In order to become a better image of God, Augustine stated that one should imitate the perfect Image of God, Christ, in particular the life he led on earth in which this perfect imaging persisted. Christ served as a model, not only for Christian life but also for one's future death and resurrection. The *Verbum Dei* as the eternal Son also re-created and re-formed the human images in the afterlife. These were the missing elements in Plotinus' philosophy. His *Noûs* did not play a direct salvific role, nor did it intervene in the lives of humans or appear in a mankind's history. It manifested solely in the higher consciousness of human souls. In contrast to this, Augustine illustrated the direct love of God for his creatures, which also included guidance in a person's material existence.

We saw in Chapter 7.3.3 that Augustine's Plotinian epistemology included Christ's Incarnation as object of contemplation, alongside the contemplation of oneself and the divine Ideas. This essentially entailed consulting a source of external or physical nature. The Scriptures, too, were an external source of divine knowledge. They contained articles of faith, a temporary form of divine knowledge, of things we cannot prove now but will be able to comprehend in the future. These external sources of *scientia* were to be utilized in the ascent to God. This constituted yet another significant difference with Plotinus' epistemology. Augustine's distinction of a personal and human element in his conception of the Godhead subsequently related to another series of major differences established in the analysis of their doctrines of love. Besides the inclusion of the Incarnation in his conception of the Godhead of love, he brought divine love down to a more human level than Plotinus, by establishing Christ's involvement with human souls who lessened their burdens by relinquishing their sins. Augustine also elevated human love and love for others in such a way, that it was equated with God's love. He also utilized the elements faith and prayer in his doctrine of love in order to strengthen one's relationship with God. These elements were virtually absent in Plotinus' doctrine of *ἔρως*. From this we can assume that his critique in *Conf.* VII.9.13–14 represented the starting point which he elaborated further in an implicit manner in *Trin.*

Augustine's second point of critique in *Conf.* was that Plotinus failed to expound the full implications of the weaknesses in the soul which hindered

retaining one's focus on God during an ascent.²⁰ The relationship between God and mankind had been tainted by the weaknesses of the human will, caused by Adam and Eve's original sin. The predicament of the will was inherited by all descendants of the two primeval humans thereafter. Contrary to this point of critique, we saw in Chapter 3.3.6 that Plotinus actually had a substantial doctrine of sin which revolved around the will; in other words, around the soul's choice of turning away or turning towards God. There were a number of other weaknesses or sins which Plotinus brought up consistently, such as the soul's forgetting her origins which resulted in a possible exclusive focus on one's material life.²¹ Or the audacious urge to turn away from one's source (τόλμα) in order to attain autarky (*Enn.* V.1.1). These Plotinian aspects were also conspicuous in various ways in Augustine's doctrine.

Regarding the difficulties of the soul to ascend to God expounded by both thinkers, this study arrived at a number of new perspectives. It pointed out Plotinus' indication that ascending to the One, even for the divine Νοῦς, was not without paradoxical complications. An example of this was the 'failure' of the Νοῦς, subtle references to the 'Desiring Intellect', who remained ungratified due to its incapacity to transcend its own Thinking and Self-Referencing, unable to unite with the One.²² The human intellect as image of the divine Intellect would surely encounter this predicament as well. Therefore, Augustine's second point of critique concerning the lack of consideration of psychological weaknesses was deemed a gray area and essentially not a major difference in the teachings of the two thinkers. Plotinus did in fact take great care to highlight the difficulties of the human soul.

On the other hand, in Augustine's mind, Plotinus did not take sufficient account of pride as the origin of all sin, as well as the necessity of Christ's grace to alleviate this. The Platonist belief that one could ascend to God solely on one's own strength arose out of an attitude of blind haughtiness. As such, Plotinus' exhortation of the cleansing of the soul—which was essential for the ascent—did not include purification by means of self-critique, making the sincere effort to realize one's sins and confessing them. These aspects were of course not emphasized in Plotinus' philosophy because the latter did not recognize Jesus Christ who revealed these necessities (Chapter 7.3–4).

Hence, the analysis of all these points brings us sooner or later back to Augustine's first point of his critique in *Conf.*, that in ignoring the Incarnation

20 See Chapter 2.1.10; *Conf.* VII–VIII.

21 E.g., in *Enn.* IV.4.1 and 2: *On the Difficulties of the Soul*.

22 See Chapter 3.4.6.

of the second Trinitarian person, one also missed out on the benefits of remission of sins and purification of the heart which would aid in the ascent to God. Thus the crux of the matter in his critique of Platonists in *Conf.* VII–VIII, was not their lack of conception of the sick human will and its tendency to sin, for the notion could be found in the *Enneads* as well. It was that the Platonists failed to realize that these weaknesses were impossible to correct without Christ's personal assistance. Furthermore, a personal relationship with Christ was awakened by the awareness of his human historical countenance through the New Testament. Thus for Augustine, a correct and complete Christology was indispensable for this life now as well as in order to prepare for the ultimate ascent to God in the afterlife.

A third point of critique in *Conf.* (and *Trin.*) was the Platonist assumption of an ascent to God and becoming godlike by one's own strength and efforts.²³ This study examined these points of critique and arrived at the standpoints that self-actualization in itself was ultimately not deemed a point of major difference. I argued that in Augustine's doctrine as a whole, he put the faithful to work on themselves just as much as Plotinus did in order to actualize intellectual vision. Moreover, Augustine urged the faithful to labor in this life, not only in order to find peace and contentment in the present, but to prepare for the future resurrection. However, the theme of the dependence on God was much more elaborated by Augustine than by Plotinus. This was due, first of all, to Augustine's insistence of the necessity of recognizing and confessing one's sins to Christ for the purification of the soul; secondly, to his recognition of the need for a perfect divine Intermediary and his grace. Another point included in the list of major differences was Augustine's use of prayer in his epistemology and in his doctrine of love. He emphasized more blatantly than Plotinus compensating for human weaknesses by praying to God for strength, for help in understanding the divine and for keeping one desiring and searching God's love (for example in *Trin.* xv.28.51). Prayer was means of expression of the well-functioning will, voluntarily seeking contact with Christ.

Another extremely relevant point raised in the evaluation was Augustine's silent but stringent critique (Chapter 2.3.3) of Plotinus' position on the divine soul: if Augustine was so opposed to the Manichaean claim of the consubstantiality of the soul with the divine, then it was peculiar that he did not criticize Plotinus and Porphyry on this point, which they both professed explicitly. As a side note here, I could not find any studies where this issue was extensively discussed. Therefore this study has unearthed a new debate issue in Augustinian-

23 See Chapter 2.1.10; *Trin.* IV.15.20; See Chapter 9.5.1.

Plotinian studies. This issue was confronted in the material on Plotinus in Chapter 3.3.5–7. His statements on the divinity of the soul and the intellect were highlighted there as well as his serious considerations of the weaknesses of the human soul and the difficulties involved of stripping away all materiality from the soul in order to become an image of the divine Intellect. The latter always seemed to occur in other contexts in the *Enneads* than his treatment of the human intellect. It was also evident that Plotinus believed that the intellect in most persons was underdeveloped and required exercise and cultivation. In consideration of the difficulties of the soul in her longings to return to God, the soul's actualization presented many complications.

These difficulties were accounted for in the context of Plotinus' epistemological depictions of the ascent, especially in contemplating the Ideas (Chapter 3.4.4). Plotinus indicated that the lower rational soul, the λόγος, which was descended in a physical body, perceived the difference between itself and the 'undescended' true self which enjoyed union with the Νοῦς (*Enn.* v.3.1–6, etc.). There was a clear distinction between ordinary consciousness and that of the intellect, in particular as to how each contemplated the Ideas. The λόγος grasped one Idea or several Ideas in a fragmented fashion; the νοῦς, supposedly all at once. Thus a certain gap existed between the modes of thinking, διανοητικόν and νόησις, which led us to assume that Plotinus' view of the actualization of the human soul as intellect (which was allegedly divine) was merely an ideal and practically unattainable. Plotinus did seem to recognize the difficulties in surpassing one's ordinary self in order to tread into divine, intellectual consciousness and in doing so, duplicating the perfect self-referentiality of the Νοῦς. If this feat of imitation were at all possible, then intellectual vision in this life would only entail a momentary glimpse in the higher spheres, a flight from normal consciousness and indeed of enormous intensity. This view was in fact no different than how Augustine described intellectual vision or the ascent (Chapter 4.4.3). The problem with Plotinus' accounts of the ascent however, was that they failed to readily mention these difficulties. Most of his accounts assumed an easiness in which the union with the divine Intellect was attained.

Of importance here is the fact that the Neo-Platonist proponents of theurgy criticized Plotinus for his notion of the undescended intellect.²⁴ It was for this reason that they prescribed soliciting assistance from demons by magical rituals, precisely what Augustine spilled so much ink on refuting in *Civ. Dei*.²⁵

24 This point was discussed in detail in Chapter 7.4.2: 'On the Divinity of the Soul (2)'.

25 *Civ. Dei* VIII.14 and 17; IX.10 and 17; X.9, 11, 24, 29 and 32; and XIX.22–23.

Plotinus, on the other hand, condoned these practices and maintained his position on the activity of contemplation to bring one to God. Here the assumption was made, that Plotinus' complete lack of interest in theurgy would have been considered in Augustine's perspective, favorable.²⁶

Ironically, Augustine praised the Platonists in *Civ. Dei* VIII.6 and X.2 that they understood the distinction between the Creator and the creation. Plotinus did indeed define the distinctions between the divine and the human worlds, especially regarding human corporality, as we saw throughout Chapter 3. What Plotinus failed to do in Augustine's eyes, was to clearly make the distinction between the actualized human soul, the intellect and the divine Intellect. A most significant statement was discovered (*Enn.* I.2.7.27–30) which spoke of the soul becoming like the gods, mentioning that their being was different from that of humans. These passages corresponded to Plotinus' depictions of the process of imaging in his cosmology, which assumed that an image is never an exact copy of that which it imaged. This differentiation would further apply to the notion that the quality of true being a human possessed could not equal the Being of its source (Chapter 3.3.5.7). Yet statements such as these were few and far between in the *Enneads*.

From this, we could deduce the following: although Plotinus often posited that the human soul and the intellect were divine, he also seemed to neutralize these statements elsewhere. Therefore he certainly did not intend to mean that the soul or intellect could become divine in the same sense as the Hypostases were divine. *Nota bene*, in contrast to Augustine, Plotinus imagined divinity as possessing different levels of hierarchy. In the case of a 'divine' human intellect, we could speculate that Plotinus would have placed this entity at the lower wrung of the hierarchy, due to its status as 'image'. Yet this idea was not mentioned often in the *Enneads*. Plotinus meant that the human intellect, unlike other regions of the soul and unlike any other thing or being on the material level of existence, had a 'free' connection to the divine immaterial world; its actualization was dependent on the soul's disposition but also to a great extent on the divine pulling the soul upwards. Evidently, the intellect required a long period of development and purification in order for a complete actualization to take place—perhaps several lifetimes.

So what does this mean for Augustine's silent critique of Plotinus' notion of the divine soul or undescended intellect? Considering the immensity of Plotinian elements which Augustine had borrowed from Plotinus' doctrine of soul to reinforce his own doctrines of intellect, imaging and the Godhead, it would

26 Also discussed by Rist, 'Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', 386–414, 393.

seem that the issue of the divinity of the soul need not be considered a point of major difference.²⁷ Nonetheless this point remained of utmost influence in Augustine's reception of Plotinus' epistemology (Chapter 7.4), because Augustine had indeed reacted upon these discrepancies in Plotinus' doctrine. The very elements which Plotinus neglected to make clear and differentiate concerning the status of the soul became major aspects in Augustine's doctrines. Especially in *Trin.*, it was evident that Augustine's treatment of the *imago Trinitatis* and the corresponding epistemology filled in the gaps which Plotinus' philosophy left open concerning the status of the soul-intellect. The filling in of gaps consisted of the following in Augustine's psychology: that the origin of the soul was indeed a pure immaterial, intellectual realm, yet pertained to the domain of creatures and could not be divine;²⁸ that the intellect-image of God possessing a strong propensity for and orientation to the divine, was likewise not divine; and that a creature could never equal its Creator in its union with Him.

The lacuna left by Plotinus concerning the soul and the intellect was filled in by Augustine by weaving together two kinds of knowledge: worldly or exterior knowledge (*scientia*) with universal true wisdom (*sapientia*) in a number of various ways.²⁹ The main thread between the two was the eternal Christ as Intermediary. The importance of studying his Incarnation through Scripture came into the picture as well, which was classified as *scientia*. By intellectual vision, he implied, this *scientia* would transform to *sapientia*. Implied here as well was that one's faith (*scientia*) in what is revealed in Scripture would eventually transform to understanding.

To compensate for Plotinus' failure to explain how the human intellect could be divine, Augustine stressed in *Trin.* xv that a complete unification of the tripartite human intellect with the triune Godhead was not possible; a more likely union could occur between the image of God and the second divine Person who brought the soul to a glimpse of the whole Godhead. Obtaining a perfect intellectual vision—in the way Plotinus often described it—was for Augustine highly unlikely in this lifetime. This kind of vision, a full-blown *visio Dei*—which by implication would include the entire intelligible world—was only feasible in the afterlife. Moreover, it would only occur by Christ's grace and after the resurrection.

To underscore the conclusion drawn here: my study has revealed that the aspects which Plotinus failed to explicate in his own doctrine, were those which

27 See Chapter 7.3,6 and 7.4.2.

28 *Gen. litt.* III.20-30.31.

29 See Chapter 7.4.1.

Augustine repeated and emphasized continuously in *Conf.*, *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.* These aspects were: the problem of the will, pride, the effects of original sin and the distinction between God and humans. In fact, all these factors, as well as those mentioned above, led to an exposition of the human soul which was more thorough and encompassed a greater sense of unity and cohesion than that of Plotinus.

Augustine's final point of critique was articulated in *Trin.* IV, where he brought up again the objectionable Platonist practices of theurgy. Parallel to his appraisal of Platonism in *Civ. Dei*, his points of critique in *Trin.* IV concerning theurgy were directed not to Plotinus, but likely only to Porphyry and his successor, Iamblichus. In Augustine's eyes, these philosophers apparently took the theurgical or magical practices so far as to disgrace the Platonist tradition: utilizing materially oriented practices to arrive at contemplation of the immaterial God.³⁰ The other points of his Platonist critique in *Trin.* IV were indeed applicable to Plotinus. They entailed the misconception that contemplating the Ideas alone would somehow provide an overview of the history of mankind or a correct teleological perspective. For Augustine, only the Scriptures could provide such insights. If we further investigate the subjects he treated throughout book IV itself, the majority of these topics refer back in some way to his reproaches of Plotinus in *Conf.* VII–VIII. In a nutshell, these were: the lack of explicit or rigorous differentiation of creatures from the Creator;³¹ the importance of regretting and confessing sins; the resurrection of the body and soul; the Son of God as Creator—Word of God and his worldly mission as Redeemer; arrogance and pride as sin; and the necessity of faith in the authority of the Scriptures.³² It is already obvious that these aspects were all missing in the *Enneads* because they were of a typically Christian nature.

4.1 *Final Reflections on Augustine's Appraisal of Platonism*

The evaluation above of Augustine's major points of critique in *Conf.* has rendered a complex picture of how he regarded Plotinus and how he utilized his philosophy. This requires us to take another step backwards and consider some

³⁰ *Trin.* IV.10.13, 11.14; treated in Chapter 2.2.2.

³¹ Note that in *Civ. Dei* VIII.6 and X.2, he praised the Platonists for their distinction of the Creator and creature. This compliment was possibly intended for later Neo-Platonists who rejected Plotinus' notion of the undescended intellect.

³² We could add to this list his doctrine of sacrament, which was not included in this study. Rist et al. suggest that this could be seen as Augustine's suggestion for an alternative to theurgy (Rist, 'Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', 393).

of these results again which will assist us in getting to not only the gist of his critique but also of the inquiry as to how Augustine utilized Plotinus' philosophy.

Regarding Augustine's critique related to the Platonist neglect of the Incarnation of the second divine Person, it could only be expected that Platonism would not include the human incarnation of a God or the other elements directly involved in Augustine's Christology which he interpreted from passages in the New Testament. Plotinus was obviously not a Christian, and furthermore, in his philosophy, God was consistently and strictly immaterial, unchangeable and eternal. Furthermore, Plotinus would not have encouraged the use of exterior elements, as those mentioned above, to elevate the soul to God. The causal source of existence, throughout all levels of reality, was consistently always within, never outside; its presence was objectified by the reasoning mind, not by texts.

Other points, such as the weaknesses of the soul—the will or self-actualization, were in themselves not deemed as significant points of differences in this study (9.5.1.). The results of the above evaluation showed that this point eventually brings us back to the first point of critique: missing the knowledge of Christ's incarnation. Without this example of humility, pride will be justified, unbridled and cause blindness of one's relationship with the Creator. The Platonists' limitation of self-critique additionally deprived them of the benefits of the remission of sins, the purification of the soul through grace.

Elaborating on the issue of the divinity of the soul—as to why Augustine did not accuse Plotinus of this even though this was at times unambiguously expressed in the *Enneads*—afforded many important insights. This analysis enabled us to see that the very elements which Plotinus neglected to make clear and differentiate concerning the status of the soul were those which Augustine repeated and emphasized continuously in *Conf.*, *Gen. litt.* and *Trin.* Hence, in order to compensate for Plotinus' failure to explain how the intellect could be divine, Augustine gave numerous explanations as to why a complete unification of the tripartite human intellect with the triune Godhead or a complete *visio Dei* were unlikely in this life. In *Trin.* xv, he concluded that a complete union was more likely to occur between the human image of God and the second divine Person who brought the soul to a glimpse of the whole Godhead. He reinforced this standpoint with expositions on the problem of the will, pride, the effects of original sin, sharply distinguishing between God and his creatures. The latter elements were treated in the *Enneads*, but likely in Augustine's mind, not sufficiently. Altogether, all these factors, as well as others mentioned above, led to an exposition of the human soul which was more thorough, encompassing a greater degree of consistency and cohesion than that of Plotinus.

In my view, it could also be that Augustine utilized the deficiencies he saw in the *Enneads* to promote his own doctrines, for example of original sin and grace in *Conf.* (which would later also serve as ammunition in his debates with Pelagians). This possibly entailed exaggerating some of the differences between himself and other Platonists. These deficiencies also enabled him to formulate a much clearer doctrine of the image of God, which not only offered a more realistic and convincing psychology, but was at the same time more personal and 'human'.

On the same line, another strong point of divergence here resulted from the comparison of the doctrines of love. One could criticize Augustine's doctrine of love that it was utterly unromantic,³³ too 'common' or ugly³⁴ or that he took no account of gender differences in the human psychology.³⁵ Yet compared to Plotinus' doctrine of ἔρως, Augustine brought personal and human spiritual love more into the foreground and even made it his hallmark. In that sense, he improved on Plotinus' famous teachings by those ways mentioned above and by promoting the extension of the fire of divine love directly into the sphere of human relations.³⁶

There are a few more conclusive statements to be made concerning the evaluation of Augustine's critique of Plotinus. In view of Augustine's massive borrowing from the *Enneads*, as well in light of Augustine's 'implicit response' to Plotinus' notion of the divine soul, it is not tenable to claim that Augustine ever 'rejected' or ceased to consult Plotinus' philosophy.³⁷ Moreover, *Trin.* cannot be designated as a polemic against Platonists as a whole, as some have suggested.³⁸

33 Hill, *Trinity*, 253, note 33.

34 Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*, 142; On the inwardness in Augustine's thinking: 'I am making a point of being critical of the concept because the experience worries me ... The very metaphor is incoherent, what eyeball can turn to look inside itself? What lover desires to find her beloved by looking in herself? Though the thing cannot be done, the desire to do it is possible, maybe even common. And I think we would do better to desire what is outside ourselves.'

35 This was suggested to me by Prof. Rist in a conversation with him in Sept. 2012 in Rome at the Institutum Augustinianum during a symposium on Augustine ('Conflict/Dialogue? Augustine's Engagement with Cultures in *De Civitate Dei*').

36 Chapter 8, sections 4.1 and 5.

37 As the following authors stated, e.g., A.M. Bowery, 'Plotinus *The Enneads*', 654–657; J.J. McEvoy lists the reasons Augustine did not remain with Platonist philosophy. 'Neo-Platonism and Christianity', 155–170, 168; Burnaby, *Amor Dei* (1991) 49–50.

38 L. Ayres, in discussion with Cavadini, writes that Augustine's need to emphasize faith in Christ in *Trin.* is relevant to his polemic against Neo-Platonists which suggests a continuation of his anti-Neo-Platonist critique in earlier works. ('Christological Context', 117–121). J. Cavadini writes: 'And thus *de trinitate* ... finds its context rather in a polemical dialogue,

Seeing the quantity of aspects of Plotinian epistemology and metaphysics Augustine integrated into his doctrine of the Trinity and the *imago Trinitatis*, it would be contradictory to maintain that Augustine's principle intention in *Trin.* was to distance himself from Plotinus' philosophy. He did indeed distance himself from Neo-Platonist theurgists and clearly so in *Trin.* IV and *Civ. Dei*. We also cannot neglect how many Plotinian concepts were integrated into his epistemology in *Trin.* VIII–XIII. However, we are not yet finished with his appraisals of Platonism in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei*, as we will see in the next chapter, as they reveal much more about Augustine, particularly his Christian Platonism.

visible in other, more familiar parts of the Augustinian corpus, against Neo-platonic views of salvation and also against (as Augustine sees it) overly Platonizing Christian views.' ('Structure and Intention', 110); (LZ: What are these overly Platonizing Christian views?) Cavadini quotes from Augustine's other works to support his argument and to stress that Augustine's agenda was not the Neo-Platonist means of salvation through introspection: (Cavadini's words): '... what purifies the eye is not introspection but the works of mercy; love of neighbor is the way in which God may be seen.' *Io. eu. tr. CXXXIV* 2.3–4; and (Cavadini:) '... our knowledge of God, while not a matter of images or extension, is our growth in charity.' *Ep.* 187.13.40–41; (*ibidem*, 122–123, note 56); E. Booth: 'The whole *De Trinitate* is a critique on Platonism.' in: 'St. Augustine's *notitia sui* related to Aristotle, the early neo-Platonists and Hegel', *Augustiniana* 27 (1977) 70–132, 364–401 (extract from Kany, 'Typen und Tendenzen', 13–28).

Augustine's Christian Platonism

As a follow-up to the preceding chapter, another synthesis of the results of this study will be formulated, yet now from a different departure point: as to how Augustine can be characterized as Christian Platonist. There is a great deal of literature available on Augustine's Christian Platonism, yet very little regarding specifically Augustine's doctrines of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis*. Thus the responses here will be predominantly based upon the material and conclusions from this study (from Chapters 6–10). We shall pursue this inquiry by first reflecting on the ways Augustine can be characterized as a Christian (section 2) and subsequently as a Platonist (section 3). Thirdly, we will strive to form a clearer picture of Augustine's relationship to Platonism, by reflecting on his comments in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei* (from Chapter 2), drawing the final conclusions in section 4.

1 How Can We Characterize Augustine as a Christian?

Augustine was a full-fledged Christian and had been so his whole life (Chapter 2.1.1). As a Manichaean, he assumed that he was Christian but later he realized that he had been mistaken. His autobiography in *Conf.* III–V described how his faith and perspective grew. He told us there that he had been a Platonist for a short period ... but not a full-fledged one, because of what he missed in their philosophy: Christ, as Incarnation of the second divine Person (*Conf.* VII–VIII). As his faith grew, he embraced such Christian principles as grace, the importance of Scripture, faith, revelation, the resurrection, and the Old Testament as prophecy of the coming of God's Word. He came to believe that the New Testament formed a unity with the Old Testament, the New, a fulfillment of the Old. He believed the creation story in Genesis to be true and that the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Paradise portrayed an actual historical event which beheld important messages for the faithful. This scenario showed how life today had become full of hardships. It also provided lessons in human nature: how the image of God became deformed; the dangers of power-seeking, egoism and improper loves and about not putting God, our Creator, first in one's life. Augustine's brand of Christianity can be characterized by his belief in Christ as God's Word or Son who was completely equal to the Father. He believed in the Holy Trinity, the Son as having been generated from

the Father—not as having been created. He also believed the Holy Spirit as an equal element in the unity of Trinity, having been originated from the divine love between the Father and the Son.

Furthermore, he was a full-fledged Christian because of his belief in the fully human manifestation of the Word of God, whose life on earth gave witness to God's compassion for mankind in absolving their sins. It was this Person of the divine Godhead with whom he had formed an intimate relationship. He regarded the second divine Person as the creative power of the Trinity, where the eternal Ideas existed. As he told us in *Conf.*, Augustine experienced Christ illuminating his intellect; his Light providing insights into himself, as well as into mankind, bible verses, the world in general and in God. Augustine cherished *Christus Creator* as having created human souls personally, who, as eternal Truth and Wisdom, would renew them in this life and fully re-create them in the afterlife to perfect images of God.¹ Along the path of self-development, the eternal *Christus medicus* would heal the broken will and improper loves, by shedding light onto one's shortcomings and sins. Praying to God the Father for Augustine actually meant praying to Christ to confess one's sins, to express one's desires for renewal, eternal life and salvation (*Trin.* xv.28.51). These were aspects which were not present in Platonism with the exception of the second divine Person illumining souls with Wisdom and Truth.

2 How as a Platonist?

In *Civ. Dei*, Augustine criticized Platonist theurgists fiercely, yet for Plotinus he only expressed praise. The conclusion drawn in Chapter 2.3 was that Augustine's appreciation for certain points of Platonists' doctrine in *Civ. Dei* corresponded to the elements that he borrowed from them and employed in his doctrine of creation and of the Holy Trinity. These included: the Platonist characterization of the divine as immaterial, eternal and immutable Being; the existence of an intelligible world in the mind of the Creator which served as archetypal creation principles as well as objects of contemplation; the human mind and its thinking processes as immaterial; the belief in divine providence, among others. We can assume that the aspects he applauded in *Civ. Dei* revealed how Augustine would have seen himself as Platonist.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, the points above were highlighted in the delineations of Plotinus' or Augustine's doctrines. More elements in Augustine's doctrines

¹ *Trin.* 11.8.14; VII.3.4–4.5.

were discovered which could be added to the list of favorable aspects in Platonism or Plotinus from *Civ. Dei*, for which he indirectly expressed his preference by integrating them into his biblical exegesis. Those were the same similarities which were mentioned in the inventory in Chapter 10. To recapitulate, those were: Plotinus' characterizations of the divine Intellect, especially his depiction of how the Νοῦς came into being from the One, becoming the Desiring and Thinking Intellect. Augustine applied these characteristics to his doctrine of the *Verbum Dei*, his description of heaven—the realm of the angels as well as to his doctrine of the *imago Dei*. These were applied as well to Augustine's exegesis of Gen. 1:26–27, as in the notions of *conversio* (as in ἐπιστροφή) and formation by means of contemplation of the Ideas. Other aspects of Plotinus' teaching of the intellect were present in Augustine's doctrine of the image of God: such as intellectual vision, the identification of the intellect with its intelligibles, self-knowledge, two types of knowledge: *scientia* and *sapientia* which corresponded to the *ratio inferior* and *superior*, etc. (those already enumerated in Chapter 10.2.). The entire subsection of 'General Similarities' in Chapter 10.4. provides a good, overall impression of Augustine's Plotinianism concerning the ascent, including the other common elements in their doctrines already mentioned here.

Augustine's elevation of contemplation of the divine and of the contemplative life as ideal also reflected his Platonist affinity, although his application was thoroughly Christian.² (Augustine's strong propensity for contemplation will be elaborated on in the next section.) His doctrines reflected as well Plotinus' profound interest in consciousness and its various levels, such as in sense perception, self-awareness and non-corporeal awareness of a truer reality above material existence. Augustine saw in Plotinus' philosophy the laboring of a great intellectual, who was disciplined and pious, mirroring himself. He followed Plotinus in his exploratory manner of describing God and the innermost

2 Ayres points out that Augustine's usage of the term *contemplatio* differs from other church fathers. Ambrose and Marius Victorinus both used the term to describe the act of consideration or reflection, which was not associated with contemplation of the divine, as Augustine does. Ayres: 'Augustine seems to have taken the more precise language from his non-Christian Platonist sources and he seems more thoroughly to have Christianized it in the sense that the language of intellectual vision is incorporated into the systematic account of the movement from faith to fulfillment' (*Trinity*, 150; note 29). Ayres argues that for Augustine, contemplation was the Christian's goal: 'Augustine sees a direct link in *Trin.* 1.8.17 between accepting that contemplation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the goal of Christian life and recognizing the faith which entails a discipline in our seeing and imagining of the material (and of material insinuations embedded in our language of faith), a discipline in which we learn NOT to take the material for that towards which it should draw us.' (*ibidem*, 151).

self, as well as in his recommendation of a correct appreciation and use of beauties in nature and the material world as a part of philosophic living. Both sought ultimate truth in transcendence and opposed materialist world views which included theurgy. Additionally, both Augustine and Plotinus were opposed to Gnosticism (*Enn.* 11.9) and astrology.³

Another point to add to Augustine's Platonism concerns the fact that Plotinus not only interpreted the works of Plato (albeit a selection thereof, namely of Plato's dialogues) but also made use of principles from Aristotle and the Stoics. His *Enneads* resulted in a synthesis of ancient philosophy up until his time. We can claim the same of Augustine: a century after Plotinus, he created his own synthesis of Greek philosophy by borrowing profusely from Plotinus' epistemology and notion of ἔργως, alongside other philosophic notions (not coincidentally, also of Aristotelian and Stoic origin) and integrated them into his biblical exegesis of the *imago Dei*.

Do the differences between Augustine as Christian and as Plotinian philosopher signify an opposition between Christian theology and Neo-Platonist philosophy? Before we attempt to answer this, let us proceed further with some remarks on Augustine's relationship to Plotinus' philosophy, in order to establish what kind of Platonist Augustine was. To do this, we will return to topics treated in Chapter 2.

3 Augustine's Relationship to Platonism (*Confessions* and *The City of God*)

In his autobiography, Augustine described the period in which he was a 'Platonist'.⁴ Sometime during his four year residence in Milan, came the day of the dramatic implosion of his old life, the moment which he characterized as his 'conversion'. After reading certain passages in St. Paul, everything in his life at that moment which was at loose ends, fell into place. What exactly his conversion portrayed or signified for him has been a subject of debate for many decades.⁵ The point here is that prior to his conversion, Augustine had been unwilling to

3 Augustine: e.g., *Conf.* IV–V, etc.; Plotinus: *Enn.* 11.3.

4 *Conf.* VII.9.13 to book VIII; Chapter 2.1.7.

5 An intellectual or a philosophical conversion? See i.e., B. Dobell, *Augustine's Intellectual Conversion, The Journey from Platonism to Christianity* (Cambridge, 2009). In my view, his conversion had to do with his 'return home' to the Catholic church. This news subsequently caused his mother, a pious and orthodox Catholic herself, to rejoice (*Conf.* VIII.12.30). If his conversion had been a conversion to philosophy then she would not have likely responded in this way.

pin a label onto himself. He wrote in *Conf.* v.14.25, that he had become a catechumen in Ambrose's church, until something better would come along. He was definitely not a Manichaean anymore, and his shame for having been a member of that sect grew as his contacts with Ambrose increased. He was also apparently not associated with any kind of official Platonist organization or institution or circle (as he had been with the Manichaeans). At least, he made no mention of this, although scholars have speculated about a circle of Christian Platonists around Ambrose.⁶ There are suggestions in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei* that he had contacted persons whom he could identify as Platonists. For example, in *Conf.* vii.9.13, he told of the conceited Platonist who had given him the Latin translations of the *libri platonicorum*. In *Civ. Dei* viii.10, he wrote that Platonist notions were close to those of Christians and for that reason 'we could have discussions with them'. In *Conf.* viii.2.3, Augustine relayed that it was Simplicianus, Ambrose's mentor, who complimented him on his choice of philosophical treatises he had been reading, because the concepts there resembled Christian doctrines. Augustine evidently took this compliment very seriously which led him to express extensive praise of specific Platonist notions in *Conf.* and *Civ. Dei*. In *Conf.* vii–viii, he praised them for their immaterial conception of God, the Son of God, the inward turn, which comprised of a *conversio* to God, an ascent and an experience of divine light. In their books, he claimed to have read of the same Son of God as in the prologue of John (which in itself was a compliment). While writing *Conf.* he was apparently not ashamed for his study of Platonism in the past, certainly not in the same way as he had been ashamed of his past Manichaean affiliation.⁷ In Augustine's final work at the end of his life, he wrote that he should have been more critical of Platonism in his earlier years.⁸ But which brand of Platonism was he referring to here?

In *Civ. Dei*, he directed his praise predominantly to Plato and Plotinus. A point to underscore here is that all the philosophers he mentioned in that work had been deceased a long while. Plato had been dead 800 years, Plotinus a little more than a century. The other Platonists he mentioned were Apuleius (died in 180) Porphyry (died in 305), and Iamblichus (died in 325). He did not mention any of his contemporaries (outside of Marius Victorinus—who had

6 A theory proposed originally by P. Courcelle, [*Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1950, 1968) 136–138 and 251–255] which was applauded by many. I concede with McEvoy, that there is not enough evidence to posit a Platonist movement within the church of Milan. ('Neoplatonism and Christianity', 164, 169). See also Van Fleteren, 'Ascent to God', 64.

7 *Retractationes* 1.1.

8 In *Retractationes* 1.3.2 he also reproached himself for having assimilated the Kingdom of God with the Platonic intelligible world in his earlier writings. See Rist, 'Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', 392.

also already died at the writing of *Conf.* [*Conf.* VIII.2.3]). The Platonist tradition naturally did not stop at Iamblichus; there were Platonists in Augustine's lifetime, whom he did not mention, such as Plutarch of Athens (an archont of the Academy who lived from 350 to 430 and was also a theurgist), and Syrianus (Plutarch's successor from 431 who died in 437).⁹ Yet Augustine devoted a great deal of his attention to Porphyry, the Platonist who was the main target of his critique, and who, according to Augustine, was a proponent of theurgy.¹⁰ Although Porphyry had expressed his reserve about these matters, Augustine found his positive remarks on theurgy hypocritical, therefore meriting a venomous attack. Additionally, Porphyry's treatise *Against the Christians* incited a sharp, critical response from the church father.

However, in reality, it was Porphyry's apprentice, Iamblichus, not Porphyry himself, who was a genuine advocate of magical practices.¹¹ Considering the fact that the Academy archonts, Syrianus and Proclus (412–485) were practitioners of theurgy as well, it is plausible to assume that Platonism in Augustine's day had come to be associated with magic or demonology. Augustine made his disgust for theurgy in *Civ. Dei* loud and clear. But why did he not refute Platonists who were alive in his day, with whom he might have had contact? We could conjecture that Augustine's contact with Platonism was mainly through their literature. But before we confirm this conclusion, let us ponder another aspect of ancient Platonism.

Platonism in Augustine's lifetime was not divided into Middle and Neo-Platonism as it is today. These divisions are in many ways artificial, useful for a general historical reference within the broader spectrum of the history of ideas. This means that Augustine's own view of Platonism was much different than how we regard it now. Therefore we need to withdraw these conventional distinctions and labels from our thinking when we set out to characterize Augustine as some kind of Platonist, because he obviously did not see them this way himself.¹² For him, a Platonist was simply a philosopher who studied the works of Plato and revered him as mentor. For example, in *Civ. Dei* VIII.12, he referred to the famous philosophers of the recent period who chose to follow Plato, and

9 The Athenian Academy continued to flourish under i.e., Proclus up until Damascius (458–after 538). See J. Halfwassen, *Plotin und der Neoplatonismus* (Munich, 2004) 142–161.

10 *Civ. Dei* X.9; Chapter 2.2.2.

11 See Iamblichus' work *On the Mysteries* I.12.42. Augustine's remarks on Porphyry, and the list of Porphyry's works he quotes throughout *Civ. Dei*, are delineated in detail in Chapter 2.2.2, 'Augustine's Critique of Platonism in *Civ. Dei*: Theurgy and Demonology'; Rist, 'Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', 393, 408.

12 Rist, 'Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', 387–388.

who did not wish to be called Academics or Peripatetic, but *Platonici*. He names a few examples in the following non-chronological order: Plotinus, Iamblichus, Porphyry and Apuleius. Note that Apuleius (125–180) is included in this series of the philosophers of the new period, who lived long before Plotinus (the third century). Today Neo-Platonists are generally considered as followers of Plotinus, who interpreted their master's work, the *Enneads*.

Further up in *Civ. Dei* (IX.10), he wrote that Plotinus was distinguished from other Platonists in that he was regarded as the best interpreter of Plato.¹³ This distinction was also made known by famous thinkers at the publication of the *Enneads* by Porphyry, thirty years after Plotinus' death.¹⁴ Considering his labelling of Plotinus as the most faithful interpreter of his teacher and how few in number his points of critique of Plato were (*Civ. Dei* XXII.26), Plotinus would have been for Augustine a far less objectionable Platonist than Porphyry and his successors. Also because Plotinus, unlike later Neo-Platonists, did not succumb to theurgy.¹⁵ If Augustine believed that Plotinus had given the best rendition of Plato's doctrines, then he would have regarded the later Platonist theurgists as deviants or even heretics of Plato.¹⁶ In that case, the theurgist Platonists, in Augustine's mind, would likely stem from Porphyry.¹⁷ Augustine seemed to have more personal affinity with the 'conservative Platonism' of Plotinus, who trusted the contemplation of higher spheres to unite him with God.

Yet Augustine never pinned the Platonist label onto himself. His unwillingness to be associated with the Platonists of his day could have been due to their embracing of theurgy but also possibly due to their critical attitude of Christians, following the example of their mentor, Porphyry.¹⁸ As already mentioned

13 In *Contra Acad.* III.18.41, he called Plotinus in whom Plato lived again.

14 Such as Longinus, whose remarks on Plotinus Porphyry mentions in *The Life of Plotinus* 19.40. It is a distinction like this which likely contributed to the demarcation between Middle and Neo-Platonists made in the 17th century, which we maintain today.

15 See Chapter 2.2.2: 'Augustine's Critique of Platonism in *Civ. Dei*: Theurgy and Demonology'. The notes supply an extensive description of Plotinus' critique of matters such as magic or demonology.

16 Rist, 'Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', 393; Armstrong, 'St. Augustine and Christian Platonism', 8.

17 I assume that Augustine did not believe that Porphyry's students' ideas on theurgy were inspired from Apuleius. For one reason, the *Letter to Anebo*, in which Porphyry speaks of theurgy in a positive light (which Augustine mentions) was directed to (Augustine believes) Iamblichus.

18 Porphyry's *Fifteen Arguments Against the Christians* is now only preserved in fragments in works by other authors. Among them are Augustine in *Civ. Dei*. X.24, 32 and XIX.23.

above and in the conclusions of Chapter 2.1.14, it would be fallacious to regard all Platonists as Augustine's 'opponents' in the same way Manichaeans were for him. It would therefore be more appropriate to consider only the anti-Christian Platonists who approved of or practiced theurgy as his true opponents. At the same time, it is plausible that Augustine employed certain articulations from Porphyry's works as well (such as on self-knowledge).¹⁹ This means that Augustine apparently did not feel hindered to borrow stimulating ideas or formulations from his opponents. Platonism may have been pagan yet Augustine considered their thinking nonetheless a step up from Manichaean Christian Gnosticism. Throughout his major works, he maintained that Platonists were arrogant intellectuals (*Trin.* IV.15.20, etc.). They disregarded the Old and New Testament, perhaps because of the simple style and lack of erudition, as he himself did as a Manichaean in his younger years. They ignored the lessons of humility exemplified by the Incarnation of the Son of God and presumed they could rise to God on their own volition and strength, as relayed throughout *Conf.* VII–VIII and *Trin.* (for example, IV.1.1 and 15.20). Plotinus would have been included as the target of Augustine's reproaches mentioned above, yet only by default, simply because he was not a believer of Jesus Christ and did not acknowledge Judeo-Christian Scripture.

Attempting to separate Augustine's orientation to Plotinus from his biblical-Christian orientation presents a number of difficulties. Augustine was correct in claiming there were many principles in Platonism which resemble biblical verses.²⁰ The most salient similarity which Augustine himself mentioned was the immaterial 'Son of God' in Platonism which corresponded with the Λόγος of John.²¹ Yet other questions arising from these remarks have yet to be fully explained. For example, was Plotinus perhaps familiar with the Gospel of John? Or were both Plotinus and John affiliated with the works of the Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, such as *De opificio mundi*? In this work, Philo posited the Λόγος as the creative entity of the world, as encompassing the Ideas and serving as an intermediary between God the Father and the world. *Nota bene*, Plotinus and Philo were both Alexandrians. The study of this phenomenon fell beyond the boundaries of this study, yet one wonders nonetheless. Augustine knew the bible inside out. Many of his favorite quotes of biblical passages were

19 See I. Bochet and various authors in her volume explicating the Porphyrian influence in Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei*: 'Le statut de l'image' or 'Présentation', 195–198, 240–271.

20 See the peculiar passage in *Enn.* I.2.3–end about the Λόγος which resembles the prologue of St. John and more so Augustine's *Trin.* XV.10.19. (See also Chapter 7.2.6.)

21 *Conf.* VII.9.13.

indeed not far from Platonic or Platonist notions, example: the designation of the inner man and outer man in Paul, a description also used by Plato and Plotinus.²² Thus we could likewise pose the question: had Paul read Middle-Platonist philosophy or Philo?

In *Civ. Dei* VIII.5–10, Augustine stated repeatedly that many of the concepts found in Platonism are those which Christians also adhered to. However, no one today would expect to find such notions as the theory of Forms or Ideas in the bible. Nonetheless, many Christian thinkers before Augustine (such as Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, Ambrose, among others) integrated similar Platonist concepts into their biblical exegesis.²³ Perhaps for this reason, it appeared acceptable for Augustine to claim that these too were Christian principles. However, Augustine showed in *De Ideis* 1 his knowledge of the fact that the theory of Forms originally came from Plato.²⁴ In any case, Augustine's integration of Plotinus' theory of Ideas into his own doctrines could imply his following a certain Christian intellectual tradition. In the case of the transmission of the theory of Ideas, Philo was a model for many early Christians, who, for example, in his *De opificio mundi*, integrated various aspects of Greek philosophy into his exegesis of the Old Testament and additionally demonstrated that the theory of the eternal Forms could be applied to the Genesis creation story.

As we have seen up until now, the task of characterizing Augustine as a Christian Platonist and his relationship to Plotinus' philosophy remains complex. Another point of complication is the influence of Ambrose on young Augustine, whose exegeses also contained many Platonisms.²⁵ Through Ambrose, Augustine came to embrace the Old Testament as God's Word and Truth.²⁶ He accepted that some biblical passages may not always be immediately fathomable, yet that bible study would certainly open doors to acquiring true divine knowledge, contrary to the Manichaean claim that the Old Testament was pre-

22 For more examples see Chapter 7.3.4: 'Faith, Scripture and Revelation'.

23 McEvoy, 'Neo-Platonism and Christianity', 156–159; Armstrong on the divinity of the soul: 'St. Augustine and Christian Platonism', 4–7.

24 To be exact, Augustine wrote here that the Ideas were known long before Plato, but it was Plato who put the theory into words.

25 From McCool's study, (see Chapter 2.1.6: 'The Influence of Ambrose') we can assume that Ambrose's treatises were likely one of Augustine's first exposures to Neo-Platonism. 'The Ambrosian Origin', 62–81. See also Rist, 'Plotinus and Christian Philosophy', 402–404. Before reading the *libri platoniorum*, Augustine was already acquainted with Platonism through the works of Cicero, who translated Plato's *Timaeus*. (Van Fleteren, 'Plato, Platonism', 651). Augustine mentions this translation in *Civ. Dei* XIII.16.

26 *Conf.* V.13.23, VI.3.4.

dominantly worthless.²⁷ At the same time of his life, he read certain treatises of the *Enneads* which must have stimulated his longing for God and eternal Beauty, the longing for knowledge of God and for his limitless goodness and love. Ironically, the understanding of God and self-awareness in the *Enneads* brought Augustine's search back to the bible, where he discovered these ideas presented in a different manner. In that sense, we could say that the *libri platoniorum* had actually enriched his understanding of the bible, as they seemed to do for Ambrose. The combined influence of Ambrose and Plotinus inspired him to interpret the book of Genesis and devise his own view on the image of God.

4 Conclusions

To distill the main conclusions of this study as well as those from this section on Augustine's Christian Platonism, we will continue the discussion of the differentiation of Augustine's biblical and Plotinian orientation in light of two most important aspects of both thinkers' doctrine of the image of God: contemplation and love.

4.1 Contemplation

Plotinus was an advocate of contemplation and the contemplative life. His philosophy sought to fathom the inner recesses of the mind and explain concretely the elevation of the soul to the Godhead through descriptions of his own experiences which attempted to make the unspeakable concrete. This description fits Augustine's depiction of contemplation in *Trin.* like a glove. Plotinus had his own school in Rome, where, it could be said, contemplation was carried out on a collective basis (Chapter 9.6.6). Augustine also introduced collective contemplation into a community, and in particular an ecclesiastical setting. This was notable in various ways. After his conversion in Milan, he rejected his plans for a prestigious career and marriage. Subsequently, he, his mother and his friends retreated to an estate in northern Italy for philosophic study (*Conf.* ix.3.5). Then, upon returning to North Africa, he founded his own monastic community. Augustine's doctrine of the *imago Dei/Trinitatis* reflects this calling to contemplative life as well, which necessarily included, at least to some extent, a certain, but not total, removal from worldly events. Yet in contrast to Plotinus, contemplative life practiced by Augustine had a distinctly collective

²⁷ In e.g., *Gen. adu. Man.* and *Gen. litt.* 1.21.41.

character. It included not only being gathered together with members of the church in prayer but also the joint study of the Scriptures, worshipping God and sharing the hope of collective redemption.

Plotinus generally depicted contemplation as a lone experience in the union with God, the Intellect or the One (for example in *Enn.* 1.6.9). On the other hand, Augustine described a shared intellectual vision with Monica in *Conf.* 1X.10.24. Augustine's deviation from Plotinus in this respect involved the calling to contemplation of Christ (and by Christ). Augustine wanted to make his readers aware of the practical ups and downs of contemplation as it related to the ascent to God, by explaining—more clearly than Plotinus—for instance, why the soul does not always co-operate with the wishes of the intellect. Similar to Plotinus, he urged the contemplation of the second divine Person of the Godhead. In *Trin.*, he explained contemplation of the *Verbum Dei* in his many intelligible facets. This study dealt with the following aspects of Christ, as an object of reflection, a spiritual exercise or an addressee in prayer: Christ, as Creator, through whom all things were made and who directly created the human soul; as the source of all our knowledge and wisdom; as the Re-creator and Re-former of human souls; Christ, who led a human life and therefore knew all the pains, suffering and injustice of human existence; Christ, whose love was infinite, who healed the human will and the wounds of the soul. He forgave our sins so that we may come to understand his eternal existence and know divine love. Augustine also encouraged meditating on Christ's relationship to the other Trinitarian persons, as such, on the divine Trinity in its unity, which was unfathomable and inexpressible in human language. The unattainability of complete knowledge of God was supplemented by prayer and the optimistic endeavor of 'seeking and finding'. It was the church father's deep conviction that faith would lead to understanding and knowledge, which would one day be given by Christ.

The contemplation of Christ, as depicted in *Trin.*, brought about a more effective ascent to God than Plotinus' account, for Christ personally assisted and accompanied the soul's gradual development to its completion, so that the human image of God may resemble its Maker. Augustine described Christ as pulling human souls out of the darkness of human existence by illuminating them (for example in *Conf.* VII.20.26—as Christ did for him), in order to prepare them for the next phase of existence in heavenly Jerusalem. Christ was our guide to our future resurrection, the example of how to become immortal and godlike in the afterlife (*Trin.* IV.3.6). Contemplation of God's intelligible and incomprehensible facets was a foremost aspect of Plotinian philosophy, but for Augustine, these aspects were integrated into a Christology in which the Incarnation and the Scriptures played a major role.

4.2 *Love*

The second aspect has to do with Augustine's appropriation of Plotinus' conception of Ἔρως. Chapter 8.4 pointed out the major differences between their doctrines of love and established that Augustine's emphasis on human love in loving and ascending to God was essentially biblical. For instance, the element Justice, in conjunction with the element love—involved in loving others, derived from sources such as 1 John 2:1 and 3:7. Augustine utilized the combination Love-Justice from 1 John to show how human relations can be improved in compliance with the commandment 'Love your neighbor'. Yet we must first improve ourselves; in order to do that, we must love God, the ultimate Good and Justice. We must also love others for their goodness, for their love of Justice, in the sense of their honesty and trustworthiness. Moreover, Augustine stressed that Christ represented ultimate Justice and Charity, as in, among other things, his unfailing forgiveness of sins.²⁸ Additionally, in contrast to Plotinus, Augustine emphasized the element love in conjunction with faith. Faith was necessary to love something or someone whom you did not fully know, in particular, God. Loving God would enhance seeing God. Augustine's doctrine of love was also accented by his advocating the practice of prayer. His 'Prayer to the Trinity' demonstrated how love and desire brought one closer to God and to understanding what one believes. Moreover, the two aspects of having faith and praying were not intended solely to be practiced by the individual, but in a collective context.

Hence, to complete this characterization of Augustine's Christian Platonism and the differentiation of aspects which were purely Christian and Plotinian, it will be useful to determine from all the major points of difference in the analyses in Chapters 6–10 which were the most important in relation to these two important points, contemplation and love, and which were distinctly biblical oriented.

In my view there are six. The first was the Christology described above, which involved the explicit human or personal element in the Godhead. A personal relationship was possible with the second Trinitarian Person, who had experienced all the predicaments of human life. He was the source of all knowledge and also served as a manifestation of Trinitarian divine love. The second was Augustine's emphasis on loving others, in elaboration of the commandment 'Love your neighbor', which he closely intermeshed with the experience of God's love so that loving God was equated with loving others. The third was Augustine's accentuation of the association of divine Love with Justice.

28 *Trin.* IV.2.4, VIII.7.10.

The fourth major distinction based upon biblical reflection entailed Augustine's restructuring of Plotinus' notion of intellectual vision and marking the limitations involved in the ascent to God, as well as clarifying to what degree godliness or purity was attainable in this life. These distinctions were based upon, among other things, his stress on the various debilities of the human soul, which in turn were derived from his doctrine of original sin, inspired by the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis.²⁹ Further, he made an unmistakably clear, ontological distinction between the existence of creatures and the Creator, which also manifested in his explication of intellectual vision. *Visio intellectualis*, he contended, could only be perfect and complete at the ultimate union with God in the afterlife at the resurrection. This qualification was inspired by the letters of Paul. The fifth involved Augustine's ideal of collective redemption. He gave more expression to spiritual love than Plotinus by articulating the importance of charity and friendships; by joining people together in communal living, in monastic life or as a church; striving together for the improvement of the soul (Chapter 9.6.6). More than Plotinus, he recognized the difficulty of remembering God. This was his motivation for forming communities in which prayer and contemplation made up a large portion of one's daily life. Augustine's eschatology, the sixth point, was unambiguously biblically inspired, as it, too, was based upon statements in Paul's letters.

Four out of the six differences dealt directly with Augustine's doctrine of love. Augustine employed profusely Plotinus' doctrine of ἑρως, yet the elements above were non-existent in Plotinus' philosophy. As such, my conclusion is that Augustine's doctrine of love represents his most significant correction of Plotinian philosophy. His corrections of Plotinus' doctrine were definitely biblically inspired and Christian. In this respect and in consideration of all the other factors discussed thus far in this chapter, we can conclude that Augustine's Christian character outweighs his Plotinian, in spite of the numerous instances (gray areas) in which it appears to be a close tie.

A question was raised in Chapter 5.1.4 which was left unanswered, which would complement the conclusions above and provide an appropriate closure of this study. Considering the characterization of Augustine's Christian Platonism above, what could we say about the readers whom Augustine had in mind when composing *Trin.*? For *Trin.* is clearly Augustine's most excellent expression of his Christian Platonism. Here his appraisal of Platonism is not as explicit or extensive as that in *Civ. Dei*. Although he included discussions of conceptions of Plato there, his critique addressed mainly the Platonist theurgists. Yet there

29 E.g., *Gen. litt.* VI.20.31, 24–35, VIII.6.12.

were also some points which doubtlessly could have been addressed to Plotinus, such as the insufficiency of the Plotinian contemplation of Ideas to provide insights into the history of mankind, as well as mankind's future. Furthermore, the major doctrinal differences between Augustine's *imago Dei/Trinitatis* and Plotinus' intellect revealed Augustine's implicit correction of Plotinus—especially Plotinus' assertion of the divinity of the soul, which Augustine never mentioned in *Conf.* or *Civ. Dei*. Yet in *Trin.*, he stressed the demarcation of the human intellect and the divine intelligence to such a degree that one could assume he was thinking of the discrepancies in the doctrine of intellect of his philosophical mentor.

It is more than obvious that Augustine was addressing a readership which had a strong literary and/or Platonist background. But could *Trin.* have been aimed at other Christian Platonists? Subordinationists? Followers of Plotinus or Porphyry? In agreement with M. Wisse, it is my strong impression that Augustine wrote *Trin.* for persons like himself: religious intellectuals or philosophers with an affinity for Jesus Christ.³⁰ His message here is clear: the only way to attain the goals which Plotinus shared with the Christians—acquiring divine knowledge and unification with the Godhead through love—is through worship of the *Verbum Dei*, the eternal Son of God who incarnated as a Jewish rabbi in Israel. He declared in *Trin.* IV that the road which post-Plotinian, Neo-Platonist theurgists tread was a completely illusory, false and dangerous one. Only in this sense, could *Trin.* be considered a Platonist polemic. In this respect, he could have been implying that these Platonists were better off if they had taken heed of Plotinus' critique of theurgy. Augustine further implied in *Trin.* that the shortcomings of Plotinus' philosophy regarding the ultimate contemplation and love for the One could be amended by embracing the doctrine of love embodied by the incarnate Son of God as depicted in the New Testament. Christ was the only existing Intermediary who truly brought the soul to the deepest contemplation and union with God the Father. Through his exemplary human life, he offered deliverance and redemption through his wisdom and love—what no benevolent demon or even an Hypostasis would ever or could ever do.

Thus Augustine's message in *Trin.* was: Platonists, go read the Scriptures (*tolle lege* revisited). There are passages there which refer to the same concepts in Plotinus' philosophy. Plotinus' philosophy even inadvertently aids in explaining some of them. Reading *Trin.* might convince the readers to come

30 *Participation*, Chapter 1: Theology. M. Wisse called these 'borderline Christians'. See Chapter 5.1.

to Augustine's church and hear his sermons, in the non-obligatory manner he himself did years before in Milan to scrutinize the sermons of Ambrose. Perhaps a conversion like his would take place—to an intense love relationship with Christ and a change of heart in appreciation of humility. Through Christianity, the heart would be purified much more effectively than the lofty but nebulous methods of both Plotinus and Porphyry. Christianity had the additional advantage that it would bring about a deeper sense of contentment in this life now, with Christ as personal support and guide.

Epilogue

What can the conclusions of this study tell us further about Augustine? Augustine is considered one of our most important church fathers, a biblical scholar, an authority of ecclesiastical dogma. As demonstrated here, his Plotinian way of thinking is undeniable and irrefutable. His admiration for conceptions expressed in practically the whole corpus of Plotinian philosophy is striking. What are we to make of this ... that one of the greatest early Christian thinkers was so enthralled with the pagan philosophic theology of this particular Platonist? In the past century, the church father's Plotinian orientation has been judged as negative by many theologians or scholars (for instance, for having incurred Christians to embrace 'otherworldliness'¹ and thereby deviate from the original biblical message).² Yet what can Augustine's Plotinian orientation tell us about early Christianity and how his contemporaries regarded him?

Of course we do not know if the bishop of Hippo's platonizing of the bible conflicted with the biblical interpretation of his fellow theologians. Neither do we know whether this was even an issue for his parishioners or his admirers.³ His major works were read by many—with *Confessions* at the top of the list of most popular—, as it is the most widely read of his works today. The well-educated readers of his major works did not necessarily represent the majority of Christians in Augustine's environment or in the whole Christian world where his books were disseminated. On the same line, we can assume that the number of persons who would have read *Trin.* in its entirety were probably fewer in number than those who had read *Conf.*

Augustine was a celebrity in his own time, he had been a speech writer for the Emperor, his debating talent was well known: he was someone with a natural affinity for public speaking. We also know from Augustine himself that he

- 1 The impression of 'otherworldliness' in both Plotinus' and Augustine's philosophies has to do with the positing of a certain hierarchy of realities in which the material and physical was the lowest. This did not imply that either of these thinkers had a distaste for the physical or historical life/knowledge or advocated the negation of such. Instead it merely indicated an awareness of transcendent causal realities which were invisible to the human eye.
- 2 Critique of Augustine's thought by modern theologians was occasionally mentioned in the footnotes in this study, yet this was essentially a subject which was deliberately avoided.
- 3 At his conversion, his mother, who was not educated, was overjoyed. She accompanied him on his philosophical retreat with his friends at the estate in Cassiciacum and even participated in the discussions (*Conf.* IX.3.5, 4.8, 8.17–end).

had many public opponents and many of these opponents were even 'mainstream' Christians (not just Manichaeans, who were Gnostic Christians) who lived in his immediate vicinity, such as the supporters of Donatism. Debating ideas in their complexity and in detail (which also sometimes entailed exaggerating the opponent's standpoint), flowed in his blood. The Roman Empire essentially brought forth a speech and debate culture, which found continuity in early Christian culture. This was most evident when the Empire came under Christian rule in the fourth century, epitomized by the debates over Christian dogma at the international councils which even persisted in later centuries. Augustine belonged very much to this intellectual, debate and speech culture.

We also know that Augustine had strong opinions which he defended with verve and style. But how resolute was Augustine in regard to his own opinions? To pursue this question as well as the inquiry above as to what this study can tell us about early Christianity, let us turn our attention to Augustine's own words concerning his biblical exegesis, his interpretation of the creation story of Genesis in *Gen. litt.* Here, as we saw in Chapter 4, his borrowing of Plotinian conceptions was particularly evident. *Gen. litt.* was namely his third attempt at an exegesis of Genesis, which he ultimately approved with satisfaction. While writing *Retractationes* at the end of his life, he looked back at *Gen. litt.* and noted that this work actually brought forth more issues (*quaesita*) than solutions to them (*inventa*) and of the *inventa* only a few were *firmata*.⁴ In fact, as we saw in Chapter 4.1, he spoke of the difficulties of interpreting a God-inspired work, a work which sometimes contained enigmatic verses of which the intention was not always clear.⁵ Considering how Augustine posited that God himself cannot be described in human language or fathomed with our ordinary consciousness, that is, our normal way of thinking with physical images from which we acquired our worldly knowledge (*Trin.* xv.7.13, etc.), we could assume that Augustine would have regarded the bible, being God's Word, generally the same: that the printed word should not always be taken literally or at face value. Yet he admitted throughout *Gen. litt.* that the bible passages which presented interpretative problems could reveal a variety of significances. For that reason, in *Gen. litt.*, Augustine was continuously analysing the standpoints of others, subjecting his own views to a critical evaluation, then scrutinizing them from all possible angles, returning to issues in previous chapters, occasionally changing his mind and then correcting himself further along the way. In essence, he was demonstrating the intellectual processes involved in biblical interpretation. It seems that he wished to convey that these knotty results were in fact

⁴ *Retract.* xxiv.24.

⁵ *Gen. litt.* i.19.38, 20.40.

the proper product of biblical interpretation. Along the same train of thought, his love for the bible would have included not only the simplicity of its language but its enormous complexity. As we have also witnessed in this study, Augustine did not shy away from complications: he admired well-articulated and profound arguments of multi-faceted and profound issues. This would clarify as well one of the reasons he appreciated Plotinus' philosophy. It, like the bible, supplied substantial mental nourishment and exercise.

In *Gen. litt.* XII, where he interpreted the different kinds of divine visions depicted in Scripture, he demonstrated that the bible was full of spiritual meaning. His broad and thorough interpretation of 'being snatched up to the third Heaven' from Paul's letter to the Corinthians⁶ testifies to his attitude that striving for a 'surface meaning' of the bible would not be a realistic endeavor and would even likely lead to erroneous conclusions.⁷ The symbolic, interpretative tradition of ancient texts (ancient in Augustine's time, such as Homer's *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* or the Jewish bible) was the spirit in which Augustine thrived and which he likely considered most noble. Thus he would have believed that in order to understand salvation history, one must recognize the allegorical nature of the bible⁸ and the fact that the proper meaning of Scripture often needed to be fettered out. This was especially obvious in *Trin.*, in how he dealt with confirming the equality of the three divine Trinitarian Persons quoting countless passages from the Old and New Testament. He often called upon the help of God, praying for guidance and assistance to do so.⁹

Seeing Augustine's affinity for the allegorical interpretative tradition¹⁰ and its relative openness, it would be plausible to assume that his fellow Christians' approval or disapproval of his interpretation was not always a matter of much concern. The greatest concern was that he, or any Christian, preached the 'rules of faith' as he calls them several times in *Trin.* (e.g., xv.28.51) which could consist of: the Trinitarian Godhead as an equal unity of three divine persons, the Incarnation pertaining to the second divine Person, the Son, the Word, and the thoroughly human character of his Incarnation.

6 2 Cor. 12:2–4; *Gen. litt.* XII.1.1–2.

7 He criticized the Manichaeans for their overly literal approach to the Old Testament which led to the misleading conception that Catholics maintained an anthropomorphic conception of God (*Conf.* III.7.12, v.14.24, VII.1.1).

8 A good example is *Conf.* v.14.24.

9 As in *Trin.* IV.21.31, *Conf.* XI.3.5, etc.

10 'No Christian ... will have the nerve to say that they (i.e. the divine Scriptures) should not be taken in a figurative sense, ...' (*Gen. litt.* I.1.1); In *Trin.* II.10.17, he argues that the human-like figure of God the Father in the Garden of Eden should not be understood in a literal manner. See also *Conf.* v.14.24.

The passages from *Trin.* 1.3.5–6 below epitomize Augustine's open attitude towards his own work: 'Accordingly, dear reader, whenever you are as certain about something as I am, go forward with me; whenever you stick equally fast, seek with me; whenever you notice that you have gone wrong, come back to me; or that I have, call me back to you.'

Here, Augustine is inviting his readers to participate in his journey of searching and finding. His invitation is extended to those who are not convinced of the truth of his words, to come and see him and communicate his or her views. In *Trin.* III.1.2, Augustine specifies more strongly than here, that his readers should be his critics.¹¹

Let us continue with the passage above: 'In this way, let us set out along Charity Street together, making for him of whom it is said, Seek his face always (Ps. 105.4). This covenant, both prudent and pious, I would wish to enter into in the sight of the Lord our God with all who read what I write, and with respect to all my writings, especially such as these where we are seeking the unity of three, of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. For nowhere else is a mistake more dangerous, or the search more laborious, or discovery more advantageous.' (1.3.5)

While accompanying him on his search of God, it is his wish that his readership will experience the Trinitarian Godhead with him. He is continuously using the words *WE* or *US*. The dangerous mistake he is speaking of could pertain to the subordinationist (heretical) standpoint, that Christ the Son is not equal to the Father (*Trin.* IV.21.31). Yet one must indeed seek this truth in Scripture (as he certainly does in *Trin.*). This laborious task involves spiritual exercises (*Trin.* IX–X) and the purification of the soul, which will enable the discoveries to be plentiful.

11 'What I desire for all my works, of course, is not merely a kind reader but also a frank critic. This is peculiarly my desire for this work, treating it as it does of so tremendous a subject, in which one wishes as many discoverers of truth could be found as it certainly has contradictions. But the last thing I want is a reader who is my dotting partisan, or a critic who is his own. The reader will not, I trust, be fonder of me than of the Catholic faith, nor the critic of himself than of Catholic truth. To the first I say: "Do not show my works the same deference as the canonical scriptures. Whatever you find in scripture that you used not to believe, why, believe it instantly. But whatever you find in my works that you did not hitherto regard as certain, then unless I have really convinced you that it is certain, continue to have your doubts about it." To the second I say: "Do not criticize what I write by the standard of your own prejudices or contrariness, but by the divine text or incontrovertible reason. If you find any truth in it, then it does not belong to me just by being there, but rather to both of us by being understood and loved by us both. If you catch me out in anything that is not true, then I must own it for making the mistake, but from now on by being more careful, we can both repudiate its ownership.'" (*Trin.* III.1.2).

So whoever reads this and says, 'This is not well said, because I do not understand it.' is criticizing my statement, not the faith; and perhaps it could have been said more clearly—though no one has ever expressed himself well enough to be understood by everybody on everything. The person then who feels this grievance against my discourse should see if he can understand others who have busied themselves with such matters and such questions, when he fails to understand me. If so, let him lay my book aside (or throw it away if he prefers) and spend his time and effort on the ones he does understand.

Trin. 1.3.5

Augustine defends that if he has not expressed himself clearly enough, he has at least adhered to the rules of faith. Here he includes a tongue-in-cheek address to those who do not appreciate his convoluted writing style: they should feel free to put *Trin.* down, even throw it away and search clarification elsewhere on the difficult subject of the Holy Trinity.

On the other hand, if anyone reads this work (LZ: *Trin.*) and says: "I understand what is being said, but it is not true," he is at liberty to affirm his own conviction as much as he likes and refute mine if he can. If he succeeds in doing so charitably and truthfully, and also take the trouble to let me know (if I am still alive¹²) then that will be the choicest plum that could fall to me from these labors of mine. If he cannot do me this service, I would only be too pleased that he should do it for anybody he can. All I am concerned with is to meditate on the law of the Lord, if not day and night at least at whatever odd moments I can snatch (Ps. 1:2) and to prevent forgetfulness from running away with my meditations by tying them down to paper; trusting in God's mercy that he will make me persevering in all truths I am sure of, and that if in anything I am otherwise minded he will reveal this also to me himself (Phil. 3:15), either by hidden inspirations and reminders, or by his own manifest utterances, or by discussions with brethren.

12 Hill's comment on these passages: 'History was to show that Augustine had good reason to enter this defense in advance (LZ: at the beginning of the work *Trin.*). He will be blamed—or praised—for being the *fons et origo* of almost as many uncatholic opinions and doctrines as have been fathered on the scriptures. This is more evidently so in matters to do with grace, predestination, and original sin than with the Trinity, but even here, as we have seen in the Introduction, he was subject to misunderstanding and straight incomprehension.' (*Trinity*, 69, note 13).

That is what I pray for, that is my deposit and my heart's desire, placed in the keeping of one who is a sufficiently reliable custodian of goods he himself has given and redeemer of promises he himself has made. ... Undoubtedly, though, it is required of me by the gentle authority of Christ's law, which is charity, that when people think I meant something false in my books which in fact I did not and this falsehood is disliked by one and welcomed by another, I should prefer to be censured by the censurer of falsehood than to receive its praiser's praises.

Trin. 1.3.5

The addressee here is the disagreeing reader. As mentioned above, in *Trin.* 111.1.2, he expresses his hope that his readers will be his frank critics and not *dotting partisans* who slavishly adhere to his perspective or prefer his exegesis to the Scriptures themselves. If the reader is of another conviction, he says, it is important that this conviction be made heard, even if Augustine himself were no longer alive. As such, he does not portray himself as an ultimate authority on truth, or convey that his interpretative skills represent the last word on these matters. He does wish to portray himself as one whose sole intention is to meditate on the Lord's law and to persevere in these truths. This work on the divine Trinity which he is now tackling, which entails the mediation on the Lord's law—or better said—remaining focused on God—, is what he wishes to be considered the fruit of his labor. If, however, it turns out that he has made false claims, then he believes that God will convey this to him, or to others in some way.

Augustine surely recognized that his speech or written articulations were sometimes defensive and adamant. What he is basically pressing on in these passages is: I have done my best, if anyone else has a better idea on the Holy Trinity, let us please discuss it. Naturally, he also portrays himself as a defender of what he sees as truth; on the other hand, he declares himself as a mere explorer into truths of which we cannot be absolutely sure. For after all, what do humans really know about God, if He is unfathomable to the human mind? If you think that you have understood something about God, then what you understood has nothing to do with God at all.¹³

This I consider the heart of Augustine's biblical exegesis: the word of God as chocked with spiritual and allegorical meaning, unearthed by a bold, inquisitive explorer, who longs for truth, seeking to know God. As to the veracity of his

13 *Trin.* 1.3.5; *Sermo* 117.

conclusions or opinions, he declared that only God can be the judge. If his viewpoint were to be proved false, he preferred the censure of such to the praise.

Regarding Plotinus' *Enneads*, we see a similar attitude: a public speaker and teacher who was eager to reveal his personal world view, yet with a vision of God which was paradoxical, enigmatic and predominantly incomprehensible to the finite human intellect. His attempts at expressing his profound experiences of the divine in words was necessarily cumbersome and unsystematic, because human language could not truly do justice to the representation of ultimate truths. We could say that this attitude of searching, exploring, formulating, re-formulating in order to define one's standpoint (which often ended up paradoxical) was certainly the Plotinian legacy which Augustine welcomed with open arms.

Judging from Augustine's popularity in his time, such an approach to biblical interpretation in which pagan philosophical or Plotinian elements were intricately integrated, was probably considered a fairly normal and not necessarily an eccentric phenomenon. This had to do with the general acceptance of allegorical interpretation. The fact that an individual's regard of the bible would deviate from others, was likely considered generally unproblematic, unless of course it deviated too far from the ground rules of faith.

I inquire then again, how should we regard Augustine's explorative and allegorical biblical exegesis with its Plotinian character, in which individual contemplation and divine illumination stand foremost; in which the search of the meaning of life entails the joy of exploring and discovering universal truth? Is this 'undesirable'? Should we also consider it undesirable that Augustine, an 'authoritative church figure', beckoned his readers and church members to accompany him in his search of God's face and to join in at the discussion table to debate these matters? I stand wholeheartedly behind Hill's commentary regarding Augustine's exhortation to his readers to be critical in *Trin.* III.1.2: 'A most necessary attitude for any honest theologian, honest bishop, and honest Christian, an attitude that has been most wanting in Catholic theological and official circles.'¹⁴

If my study has been able to prove the positive effects of Augustine's Plotinian orientation which could be beneficial for Christians today, then I shall deem this research project a success.

¹⁴ Hill, *Trinity*, 128, note 2.

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De haeresibus ad quodultdeum liber unus: CCL 46

De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus manichaeorum libri duo: CSEL 90

Contra academicos-De academicis libri tres: CCSL 29, CSEL 63

De doctrina christiana: CCSL 32, CSEL 80

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De fide et de symbolo: CSEL 41

De genesi contra manichaeos libri duo: PL 34:

De genesi ad litteram liber unus imperfectus: CSEL 91

De immortalitate animae: PL 32

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De musica: CSEL 25/2

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De uera religione liber unus: CCSL 32, CSEL 77/2

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In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXXIV: CCL 36
Retractationum libri duo: CCSL 57; *CSEL* 36
Sermo 80: *PL* 38
Soliloquiorum libri duo: CSEL 89

Plotinus

*Titles of The Enneads*¹

The Life of Plotinus, Vita Plotini

The First Ennead

- 1.1 [53] *What is the Living Being, and What is Man?*
- 1.2 [19] *On Virtues*
- 1.3 [20] *On Dialectic*
- 1.4 [46] *On Well Being*
- 1.5 [36] *On Whether Well Being Increases with Time*
- 1.6 [1] *On Beauty*
- 1.7 [54] *On the Primal Good and the Other Goods*
- 1.8 [51] *On What Are and Whence Come Evils*
- 1.9 [16] *On Going Out of the Body*

The Second Ennead

- 11.1 [40] *On Heaven (On the Universe)*
- 11.2 [14] *On the Movement of Heaven*
- 11.3 [52] *On Whether the Stars are Causes*
- 11.4 [12] *On Matter*
- 11.5 [25] *On What Exists Potentially and What Actually*
- 11.6 [17] *On Substance, or On Quality*
- 11.7 [37] *On Complete Transfusion*
- 11.8 [35] *On Sight, or on how Distant Objects Appear Small*
- 11.9 [33] *Against the Gnostics*

1 The titles listed here are from Armstrong's translation (1989) which is the primary translation utilized in this study. I have added the chronological numbering here because the conventional way of referring to particular treatises of the *Enneads* in some countries—such as France—are by citing these numbers.

The Third Ennead

- III.1 [3] *On Destiny*
- III.2 [47] *On Providence (I)*
- III.3 [48] *On Providence (II)*
- III.4 [15] *On our Allotted Guardian Spirit*
- III.5 [50] *On Love*
- III.6 [26] *On the Impassibility of the Things Without Body*
- III.7 [45] *On Eternity and Time*
- III.8 [30] *On Nature and Contemplation and the One*
- III.9 [13] *Various Considerations*

The Fourth Ennead

- IV.1 [21] [2] *On the Essence of the Soul (I)*
- IV.2 [4] [1] *On the Essence of the Soul (II)*
- IV.3 [27] *On Difficulties About the Soul (I)*
- IV.4 [28] *On Difficulties About the Soul (II)*
- IV.5 [29] *On Difficulties About the Soul (III) Or On Sight*
- IV.6 [41] *On Sense-Perception and Memory*
- IV.7 [2] *On the Immortality of the Soul*
- IV.8 [6] *On the Descent of the Soul into Bodies*
- IV.9 [8] *If All Souls Are One*

The Fifth Ennead

- V.1 [10] *On the Three Primary Hypostases*
- V.2 [11] *On the Origin and Order of the Beings Which Come After the First*
- V.3 [49] *On the Knowing Hypostases and That Which is Beyond*
- V.4 [7] *How That Which is After the First Comes from the First, and on the One*
- V.5 [32] *That the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect, and on the Good*
- V.6 [24] *On the Fact that That That Which is Beyond Being Does not Think, and on What is the Primary and What the Secondary Thinking Principle*
- V.7 [18] *On the Question Whether There are Ideas of Particulars*
- V.8 [31] *On the Intelligible Beauty*
- V.9 [5] *On Intellect, the Forms, and Being*

The Sixth Ennead

- VI.1 [42] *On the Kinds of Being (I)*
- VI.2 [43] *On the Kinds of Being (II)*
- VI.3 [44] *On the Kinds of Being (III)*
- VI.4 [22] *On the Presence of Being, One and the Same, Everywhere as a Whole I*
- VI.5 [23] *On the Presence of Being, One and the Same, Everywhere as a Whole II*

- VI.6 [34] *On Numbers*
VI.7 [38] *How the Multitude of the Forms Came Into Being; and on the Good*
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